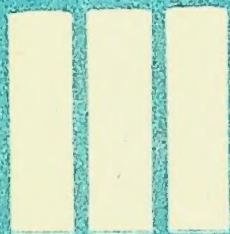


# THE BHAGAVAD GITA

AND

# THE BIBLE



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# THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE BIBLE

(Proceedings of the seminar under the auspices  
of the Christian Retreat and Study Centre,  
Rajpur, Dehradun.)

**May 5 to 9, 1972**

*Convenors :* REV. D. C. SCOTT  
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आशीर्वाद

श्री रामचन्द्र जी,

सत्य, प्रेम, करुणा । आप लोगों  
की विचार गोष्ठी के लिये ।

विनोबा का

जय जगत् !

ब्रह्म विद्या मन्दिर

२६.४.१९७२

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

Is it not an irony of fate that religion which proclaims the unity of mankind on the basis of the brotherhood of man is considered by some as making for dissension and discord, misunderstanding and ill-will, intolerance and backwardness? Religion, which defines the highest ideal which man ought to and can attain and charts the approaches to it, is one of the main unifying factors of humanity, and its role in moulding the life and thought of individuals and societies through the long course of history cannot be overestimated.

It will not do to be cynical and cry in despair that we have enough religion to mislead and destroy us and no religion to guide and save. If considered dispassionately man might have to admit a greater share of responsibility for this than is usually conceded. The man of religion neither imagines nor merely believes in the existence of a spiritual entity called God, but bears personal witness to His eternal presence everywhere and in everything. Deciphering the signature of God in every entity surrounding him and recognising a benign beckoning from the Beyond in every event happening around him, how can he hate or despise or be indifferent to anyone or anything? His realisation of the unity of life derives from his vision of its divinity. Hence he loves all beings equally and works not only for the material wel-

fare but also for the spiritual well-being of mankind. Duty, responsibility, concern and commitment, for him, become identified with love, a natural function of the divine vision, the spontaneous expression of the divine joy and not the imposition of a social or ethical code. Ever in contact with the springs of life and possessing comprehensive vision, tolerance and goodwill, he becomes the true benefactor of mankind, for he invites us to join the splendid symphony of the universal spirit, to which he himself has been recently admitted.

The participants had gathered in a spirit of knowing and appreciating the abiding elements in the scriptures. It was not with a view to proving the superiority of one scripture to the other or exhibiting one's scholarship that they had assembled, but to go to the scriptures with greater reverence, to undertake a careful and purposeful study of them. They had met to seek enlightenment with humility, which did not in any way rule out the spirit of enquiry.

The approach was not merely academic or intellectual; the practical aspect of religion was not lost sight of. Realising that religious life implies clarification of thought, purification of emotions and strengthening of will, devout and prayerful meditation preceded every day the deliberations of the seminar. Every morning, prayer-cum-meditation meetings were organised when passages from the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible were recited. The participants were imbued with the spirit expressed by the poet:

Trailing clouds of glory, do we come from God,  
Who is our Home.

In every item of the seminar, devotional fervour and catholicity of outlook were visible.

The scriptures are true because they emanate from the true vision of reality; the need of the hour is to recapture that vision and to re-vivify our faith in the scriptures by studying them dispassionately. We should avoid the pitfalls of dogmatism and skepticism. An objective study of scriptures should provide lessons for freedom and not fetters for bondage. Moral and spiritual values should guide our pursuit of knowledge for, without these values, cultivation of intellect alone will degenerate into wasteful forms of chicanery. Religion is not a matter of mere study; it is not verbal jugglery or intellectual luxury; it aims at spiritual illumination. It lifts us from worldly life to a life in spirit. The vision of the ultimate reality which it envisages is primarily intended to be experienced, not talked about or written about.

The participants were inspired by the lofty ideal that those who think of God, who have communion with him, who abide in him and who delight solely in him become holy. They were convinced of the words of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew); and of Kṛṣṇa; "Neither in Paradise nor in the hearts of the meditating recluses do I dwell, Nārada! but wherever my devotees gather to sing of me, there am I always found." (Bhagavata). —B. R. KULKARNI



## INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY SHRI KAKA SAHEB KALELKAR

Dear Friends,

I welcome this opportunity to be present amongst you during these few days when we have assembled to share our innermost thoughts and experiences on the two great religious streams, namely, Christianity and Hinduism, represented by their two great scriptures—the Holy Bible and the Bhagavad Gita. We are all very grateful to our dear friends, Rev. David Scott, his colleagues and family for making this meeting possible at this lovely spot.

Fortunately for me, I am born in a country and society where we have people living in different grades of cultural standards and where almost all the (major) religions of the world have found a permanent place. Even the most orthodox people have a right to lead an honourable existence in this country. We are, therefore, taught to respect all religions and their prophets and saints. This universality has been beautifully summed up by Mahatma Gandhi in what he described as *Sarva-Dharma-Sama Bhava* for which principle he worked all his life.

The generality of people hardly have the chance of studying the deep philosophy behind each religion; but they know the way of life adopted by each caste, religion or denomination. In these days of universal freedom no group can entertain the idea of overcoming other groups or imposing its own cultural standards and domination on others. Over these several centuries of intercultural and



interreligious co-relationship, our people have gradually evolved the spirit of "Live and let live." There are many in our country who have accepted Gandhiji's ideal of the familihood of all religions and faiths. Something tells me that the God of history has provided us in India with this unique opportunity of establishing Viswa-Samanvaya, that is Universal Harmony.

If we can succeed in this great mission it will be possible for us to spread this great idea of universality and familihood of all great cultures, in all continents of the world and amongst all races, making up the totality of humanity. The narrow and blind attitude of rivalry, resistance and warfare can, under the present circumstances, lead only to total destruction of all human values and human life itself. It is a realisation of this new mission of India that brings us together in a spirit of love, respect and family feeling.

We have profound respect for the love and devotion the people of each faith feel for their own religion and way of life. We have also discovered that extreme and blind orthodoxy is more harmful to any religion than even atheism, scepticism or narrow-minded rationalism. The blindly orthodox person does not make any distinction between the spirit and the form; he worships the past and develops "museum values" to the detriment of "life-values" and has no vision of the future for his own religion. We must recognize that every religion has evolved out of the teachings of prophets, rsis, apostles and saints who are inspired by the Divine Power from time to time, to suit the

needs of the race, age and the particular situation. Prophets and saints are, no doubt, inspired by the Divine Power; but they express this inspiration according to the limitations of the language and culture in which they are born. The scriptures which form the body of their teachings must be respected; but they must not be blindly followed according to the letter of their writing. The teachings have to be interpreted with the spiritual understanding of the leaders of the society in all ages and climes, not merely by the grammar and philology of their language. The blind orthodox stick to the literal meaning of their scriptures and their interpretation is limited to the linguistic rigidity of the wordings to which they feel they are bound.

The wisdom and experience of the past is undoubtedly a great asset and valuable capital for the future of the race; but mankind is not meant only to preserve the forms and traditions even when they have outlived their utility. Instead, we have to utilise all such experience during our present struggle for existence on a higher plane. We have to establish a nobler society that will come up to a higher standard preached, but not yet realised by the religions we have inherited.

It is our experience that highly intelligent and pious laymen of any religion are better leaders in the spiritual development of a race or people than the pundits and the orthodox masters of the scriptures, and the official heads of any religious organisation. The interest and power of these heads depend upon preserving old established forms and

antiquated traditions. These pundits succeed in preventing progress only for a limited time, because the higher and nobler spirit of religion gradually asserts itself through the lives and teachings of religious reformers and saintly personalities; and then, the religious heads begin to yield, perhaps, too late in the day.

The subjects of the study have been broadly indicated in Dr. David Scott's circular letter inviting our participation, and each one of you has brought your wisdom and experience born out of your study and research of the different aspects of your own and other faiths. In the course of our study we shall share all these riches and by the time we come to a close of our study we will, surprisingly to ourselves, come to realise what a great wealth of philosophical and spiritual knowledge has been revealed to us by God (the Universal Soul) through these two great scriptures—the Holy Bible and the Bhagavad Gita that we have been studying.

Let me share a few thoughts with you in this connection though these would be random thoughts.

Experience and reason are to be based on a concept of truth which is good for all people and for all times.

Reverence to all religions should be accompanied by loyalty to truth revealed to mankind in various forms.

A study of different scriptures would help us in understanding similarities instead of differences.

Differences which seem to be unsolvable and irreconcilable can be reconciled if we become

aware that such differences are due to the different psychological and spiritual levels of approach and understanding. This is exemplified very effectively in the threefold systems of Indian philosophical thought, namely,

- (a) Dualism, based on body-consciousness: I am only the servant; the Lord is my Master to whom I offer obedience and worship.
- (b) *Qualified Non-Dualism based on Personality-Consciousness:*
- (c) *Absolute Monism based on Universal Consciousness:* Lord! I and Thou art one; I and my Father are one and yet 'Thy Will be done.'

The above concepts have been beautifully put in the Sanskrit verse:

देह बुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहम्  
जीव बुद्ध्या त्वदं शकः ।  
आत्म बुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहम्  
यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥

The process of God's revelation is just like the rubbing of two mighty trees in a forest first creating heat, then smoke and then flame leading eventually to a sudden conflagration burning all dross away.

Revelation from time to time to humanity may be evolutionary, but it may be only in different forms according to different circumstances.

The Viswa-Rupa Darsana in the Gita is a concession to human need; it may be a mere human weakness; here the weakness of Arjuna needed the vision of the Divine in all its manifold and mighty



forms to raise himself from his sense of despondency.

It is the Omnipotence of God which all should recognise in God's power to reveal himself, in any way He wills to do. By denying the validity of revelations other than one's own, we are in a sense questioning the Omnipotence of God and asserting God's impotence.

Yoga and meditation or contemplation are essential for strengthening the path of the aspirant towards Karma and Jnana. Some parts of Hatha-Yoga-Asana and Pranayama along with the fundamental development of Yama and Niyama codes of conduct and attitudes, have been incorporated in the practice of Rajayoga. The other elaborations of Hatha-Yoga have been left out.

Powers and faculties of body and mind are developed through Yoga and meditation leading to concentrated thinking, harmony in understanding and efficiency and skill in action. They develop the sakti-like projection of rays in all directions.

To a yogin, everything is a quest and he has an answer ready for all problems of life, born out of his self-knowledge and self-confidence. He has the power both of grasping essentials and tackling situations.

Real bhakti transcends worship and prayer and expresses itself through selfless service to the Lord who is immanent in all creation.

I thank you for asking me to inaugurate the seminar. I wish the seminar all success.



# Gita in Time and Beyond Time

Richard V. De Smet, S.J., Ph.D.

The tradition is unanimous in holding that the Gita is a work of *smṛti*, that is that it had certainly a human author (or perhaps several.) It originated at a certain moment of history, against a definite background, and quite likely as a response to some particular need or crisis of that time. Like all great literary creations, it has not only an atemporal message and glory but it is also rooted in history by links which it is not an idle or unreverent undertaking to explore. This exploration presented here without scholarly apparatus may be found to throw much light upon a work which itself was an historical event as it ushered India through a new spiritual incubation. The first three sections of this article will expose the temporal setting of the Gita whereas its timeless teaching will be systematized in the fourth section.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE GITAKARA

The *Bhagavad-gita* appears to be one of the earliest, if not the very first, of the didactic insertions added to the *Bharata* epic. The dates proposed

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<sup>1</sup> This article, first written for the jubilee number (1972) of the *Journal of Indian History*, has then been used with slight modifications as the introductory paper of the Gita and Bible meeting in Rajpur.

on serious ground for its composition oscillate mainly between the 5th and the 2nd century B.C. For reasons deriving from the coincidence between internal and external data as will appear from this article I am inclined to place it towards the end of the 3rd century B.C. The unicity of its authorship has been questioned especially during the first half of our own 20th century by Telang, Garbe, Otto, Jacobi, Hopkins, Bhagawat Sastri, Carpenter and others; but scholarly consensus has veered more and more in favour of its unicity in the wake of Dahlmann, Oltramare, de la Vallee Poussin, Lamotte, Formichi, Ranade and recently Zaehner. I am now siding with it with the proviso that I wish at a later date to examine thoroughly the three-layer theory of Dr. Khair, some of whose arguments are *prima facie* very convincing.

The original creator, or at least the chief author, of the Gita appears to have been a Bhargava Brahmin, most likely from the region of Mathura. The work proves him a genius whether as a poet, a thinker, or a religious man. Deeply attached to his Brahmanic past, he confronted a present crossed by the rivalry of competing trends and composed the Gita in a spirit of reconciliation and wise discrimination, blending with consummate intelligence the valuable elements of at least nine traditions. These may be said to be the marking features of his religious landscape and are now to be described briefly.

(1) *Ritualistic Brahmanism*: The sacrificial duty, though derided in some Upanisads or by the sramanas, is still generally observed in the 3rd



century B.C. by the majority of the aryanised population. *Caturvarnya* remains the basic structure of society. But the ethics of secular activity (*pravrtti*) and caste duty (*svadharma*) is undermined by the sramanic ideal of *nivrtti*, ahimsa and monastic renunciation (*pravrajya*).

(2) *Upanisadic Doctrines*: They seem to remain confined within the upper classes of the brahmanic society where they are the property of special schools and families. The activity of composing or compiling new Upanisads has been pursued, often with a tendency towards interpretative re-reading and systematizing of the older ones as well as a will to take account of the sramanic developments both positively and negatively. The discovery of the *Brahman-Atman* as Ground of all beings does not seem yet to have attained the masses since it is not yet clearly referred to by Jains or Buddhists; what the latter reject is an *atman* of the type of the Jaina *jiva* or the early Sankhya *purusa*. As to the unsophisticated Upanisadic conception of *karma* and rebirth, it is being rivalled especially by Buddha's more radical theory, while the "negative theory" or *Brahman* and *moksa* is left behind by his eschatology in terms of *nirvana*.

(3) *Early Sankhya*: As initiated in the Upanisads, it is theistic though it concentrates upon analysing man and the world (into individual *purusas* and their common *prakrti* marked by three *gunas*). The term "*sankhya*" stands generally at this time for "philosophy" understood especially as that kind of analysis.

(4) *Yoga*: It is not yet a special doctrine but

a method common to the diverse currents of self-culture (*sadhana*) and thus pluriform and plurivalent. Whereas the Upanisads recommend it for gradual self-integration and self-realisation, the Buddhists use it for the purpose of self-disintegration and the Jains of dekarmanisation.

(5) *Saivism*: In contrast with its widespread development after the 6th century A.D. this religion is still little organised. But it has already produced the *Svetasvatara Upanisad* whose benign (*siva*) Rudra is a strongly monotheistic God, attainable through *sankhya-yoga* and a *bhakti* made possible by his grace. Its indirect allusions to Buddhism and its doctrinal distance from the early Upanisads tend to show that it had not yet reached the last stage of its composition before the 3rd century B.C.

(6) *Cult of Narayana-Visnu*: Narayana is a non-vedic, perhaps Harappan, deity. Mentioned for the first time in *Satapata Brahmana*, xii, 3, 4, 1 and xiii, 6, 1 he is said there to have by a Five-Day Sacrifice (*panca-ratra-sattra*) placed himself successively in all beings. This appears (from Moh., xii, 328, 35) to have been a *purusamedha* partaken by a whole community. Hence, he became *Purusa Narayana* and stood for the collective entity of man. By extension he was the god embodying the whole universe and identified sometimes with *Prajapati-Brahma* or, later on, with *Visnu*.

The terms *bhagavat*, *bhakta*, *bhakti* were originally associated with him. The root *bhaj* means to divide, allot, share, partake, eat (not yet to adore and serve.) *Bhaga* in *Rgveda* means wealth, share,

lucky lot. *Bhagavan* is the possessor of wealth to be shared. *Bhakti* is a portion, a share. *Bhakta* means allotted (especially food, hence, later, boiled rice.) It also designates the individual who is thus benefited. Gods whose food can be shared by men are called *Bhagavan* (or god *Bhaga*); and likewise those men whose wealth, material or spiritual (as, for instance, in the case of the Buddha,) becomes shared by others. Then *bhakti* begins to stand for any gracious favour (*prasada*) and to connote the idea of benevolence, fondness, based on kinship (first clanic or tribal, then intellectual) or, correspondingly, for the devoted service of a loyal slave (house-born as opposed to a hired worker) or of a god's devotee. *Bhakti* as religious devotion appears for the first time in *Svet. Up.*, vi, 23 and in some Buddhist works. The accompanying idea of grace appears in *Katha Up.*, ii, 20 and 23 (but cf. *Chand. Up.*, iii, 4).

This *bhakti* seems to have become important especially among the worshippers of *Narayana*. These were either the *Bhagavatas* who worshipped him as *Bhagavan* and had accepted the Brahmanical social order, or the *Pancarattras* more attached to the old myth and indifferent to *varna* ethics, or the *Ekantins* who worshipped him exclusively and were probably not householders but *sannyasins*. *Bhagavatism* had attracted even foreigners like *Heliodoros* and marks the earliest additions to the *Bharata* version of the *Mahabharata*.

*Visnu* is identified with *Narayana* for the first time in *Maitri Up.*, vii, 7. In *Rgveda*, he is statistically a god of the fourth rank. Yet, he is the

highest and furthest away (*parama*) as opposed to Agni who is the lowest and nearest (*avamaya*). In the Brahmanas, he is associated with sacrifice. This association and the idea that he dominates and penetrates all may explain why he eventually became identified with Narayana. After Indra lost much of his sovereignty, Visnu took many of his features. This contributed to the brahmanisation of the Visnuised Narayana. Only after the Gita will the name Visnu slowly supersede the name Narayana.<sup>1</sup>

(7) *Cult of Vasudeva-Krsna*: Among the Vrsnis of the Mathura region, Krsna was a hero of the Sattvata sect of the Yadavas. His cult as well as his name disclose many non-vedic and non-Aryan elements. He and Sesa-Sankarsana-Baladeva (the snake-god or *naga*, called "Ploughing" and "Power-god," a totemic deity of an agricultural tribe,) were popular deities in the 4th century B.C. Megasthenes appears to refer to them. Originally they were only the male attendants of Ekanamsa, the goddess of the Vrsnis. But with the passing of the tribal society from matriarchal to patriarchal right, they had become more important and a mass of heroic tales and legends had gathered around them. Krsna, however, became preponderant. Was this a cause or a result of his assimilation with the Krsna, disciple of Ghora Angirasa and himself a wise teacher, of *Chand. Up*; iii, 17, 6? In any case, ritual dramas centred on him were stag-

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<sup>1</sup> For the information gathered in this section 6 and in the next, cf. S. Jaiswal, *The origin and development of vaisnavism*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967.



ed in Mathura about the 2nd century B.C. (cf. Patanjali on Panini, iii, 1.26). This popularity explains why *BhG*, x, 21 can say that Narayana, who is Visnu among the Adityas, is Vasudeva among the Vrsnis. Thus the Vasudeva-Krsna cult was at hand to be Narayanised and thus transformed into a powerful force by which the re-brahmanisation of society could be accomplished.

(8) *Jainism*: It has been doubted how much the Gitakara knew Jainism but in 17, 5-6 he seems to direct an *ad hominem* argument against the Jainas who "torment the mass of living beings whose home their body is." Again in 17, 19 self-mortification "inspired by perverted theories which recommend self-torture" is condemned as *tamasic*. But the Jaina conception of *karman* as a kind of dyestuff, or *nirvana* as omniscience, and of the world as uncreated, finds no characteristic echos in the Gita.

(9) *Buddhism*: The Buddhism of that period is the most successful and, for a Brahmin, the most disturbing religious movement. Its *ahimsa* discredits the sacrificial *dharma* of the Brahmins and the military duty of the Ksatriyas. Its monasticism attracts many of the upper castes away from home so that sons are no longer there to perform their parents' funerals and maintain their line. It even entices daughters, wives or widows away from their household duties. *The Jatakas* testify to the drama brought about in many families by a *parivrajya* decision. Further, Buddhism reduces the *devas* to the status of ignorant samsarins, less apt, however, than men for accepting its *dharma* due to their

lordly condition. Its theory of no-atman is directly opposed to the Sankhya (and Jaina) anthropology and, at least by implication, to the Upanisadic teaching.

However, the humanising ethics it propagates has obtained an ever increasing social approval at the expense of the legalistic brahmanic *dharma*. It incessantly recalls the memory of its founder, calling him Teacher by excellence (*Sattha* and *Bhagava*), and exalting his attractive virtues (mildness, kindness, compassion, moderation, wisdom). Many are tempted to take their refuge in this great human and humane figure and to display veneration (*pūja*) around the stupas which contain his relics. Pilgrims like to follow in his footsteps from Lumbini where he was born to Kusinara where he died.

To all this the Asokan atmosphere of religious universalism has given a powerful impetus and Buddhism has become a widespread religion offering not only meditation and monastic renunciation to the most daring but also simpler practices of piety and examples of marvellous morality (often in the form of tales) to the masses. It is restricted by no esotericism of language, varna or sex distinction. Finally the belief has even begun to spread that Buddha was really an eternal being, the Superman or *Mahapurusa*, who had descended from his *Tusita* heaven to undergo human existence in order to reach his *dharma*. Thus Buddhism is now a religion of faith and *bhakti*.

## 2 THE PROBLEM OF THE GITAKARA

As presented to the sight of the Gitakara, this

religious landscape did not reveal a harmonious diversity but a diversity bristling with tensions and rivalries between contending trends. Essentially this could be summed up as a conflict for supremacy between two *dharma*s, the old aristocratic, conservative, legalistic, ritualistic and sacral dharma of Brahmanism, and the new, egalitarian, non-conformist, ethical and monastic dharma of the Sramanas, especially Buddhists. Their opposition did not exist simply on the level of metaphysics but reached down to the concrete level of actual life of individuals and families in a sacral society threatened by sramanic secularisation. Indeed whereas the human world of Brahmanism was totally penetrated by the sacred, sramanic monasticism was thoroughly desacralised and its influence on society was not only humanising but humanistic and secularising. Even the term *dharma* used by both was highly ambiguous: law (propped up by doctrinal conceptions) for Brahmanism, it was essentially doctrine (commanding an ethical discipline) for Buddhism. The gap between the two was wide. Small accommodations had taken place but no deep contamination and even less any real harmonisation.

This gap presented a problem probably felt by many with a certain despair. But the Gitakara seems to have realised that problems are meant to be solved. If there was a gap it had to be bridged. And the pillars for this bridge already existed as features of his own personality:

—Openness of heart and mind, which does not

mean softness or indifferent tolerance, but comprehension based on sympathy.

—Real, personal appreciation of the pluralism of his world. In such a world the question is not so much of applying the universal to the contingent but of discerning the universal in the many contingencies.

—Readiness for renewal. A renewal is a going forward and a return; a return to the sources and a going forward to adapt their original inspiration to the needs of the present. It is return and adaptation, tradition and innovation, creative ability to adapt.

We cannot insist too much on this readiness of a great soul to clear the springheads of his culture, adapt their wisdom to changed circumstances, and adopt from the newly arisen trends whatever appeared valuable while rejecting the rest or, if possible, correcting it.

What would result from this would be a new *dharma*, apparently restating the old brahmanic one, but with features of the new sramanic one. Mere syncretism, however, is seldom attracting and convincing. What this new *dharma* needed was an authority as human as that of Buddha but closer to divine infallibility; a new spirit which could surpass sacral legalism as well as moralistic and yogic self-training; and a literary setting which could make it immediately accessible and persuasive to the masses. The new *dharma* should be new but appearing to be old (for men are naturally conservative), easy while denying none of the approved forms of spiritual heroism, and opening

to all the hope of a *moksa* far more desirable than the *svargas* or *nirvanas* promised by the conflicting dharmas.

The Gitakara visualised all this. The authority for the new dharma would be Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa speaking as the supreme divine Person; his spirit would be the *bhakti* of mutual surrender, and the *moksa* he promised would be *parabhakti*. This could be set forth as a dialogue to be inserted in the popular epic, the (*maha*) *bharata*, and centred on a problem of ethics on the pattern of the popular Buddhist anecdotes.

### 3. A LITERARY STARTING-POINT OF THE GITAKARA

An article of K. N. Upadhyaya<sup>1</sup> permits us to refer to a definite Buddhist text which very probably influenced the Gitakara in the inventive phases of his undertaking. It is *Samyutta Nikaya*, I, xi, 1, 4 which is entitled "Vepacitti or Forbearance." I can only mention here Upadhyaya's convincing study of the style and terminology of this text and now summarise the anecdote itself:

One day the 33 devas had defeated the asuras and brought their king Vepacitti to Indra (Sakka) after binding him hand and foot and neck. Thus bound, Vepacitti railed at, and reviled, Indra with coarse and scurrilous words. Indra, however, remained unmoved. Then Matali, his charioteer, addressed him thus: "Are you afraid or weak that you forbear such scurrilous speeches?" — "I am

<sup>1</sup> The Impact of Early Buddhism on Hindu Thought (with Special Reference to the Bhāgavadgita,) *Philosophy East and West.* 18/3 (July 1968,) pp. 163-173.



neither," replied Indra, "but why should one with understanding engage himself to bandy with a fool?" — "Is it not the duty of the strong-minded man to restrain the fools?" — "What avails to stop a fool filled with rage is oneself to grow calm and still." — "The fool will fancy your calm as fear and press you harder." — "Whatever he or others may fancy does not matter; fame or ill fame, praise or slander are immaterial to the enlightened. To resist force with force is only brutal and is really an indication of weakness. To fall victim to anger is a sin. But he who forbears and forgives does good to both himself and the other one."

The Gita dialogue between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa also takes place within the context of a struggle between "asuric" (the Kauravas) and "daivic" (the Pandavas) warriors though on the eve rather than at the end of their battle. Arjuna, by varṇa a warlord like Indra, seems also to have been exposed to the teaching of non-violence (the first precept of both Jainism and Buddhism) for he refuses to fight even to punish unjust contenders. As anger for Indra, this is for him a matter of sin. It would, he says, be a monstrous sin (*mahat papam*) to kill kinsmen issued like him from Bharata. He cannot covet sovereignty, enjoyments and pleasure at the price of sin. His opponents are blinded by greed but he is wise enough to see that family strife leads to ruin of the family and of the primeval family laws. Lawlessness leads to debauchery of women and, hence, to mixing of castes. Wreckers of the family fall down to hell together with their ancestors now deprived of their due offerings. Thus

it is clear that Arjuna's objections issue from brahmanic *dharma* but coincide with sramanic *ahimsa* and thus detract from his *ksatriya* duty.

Krsna, his charioteer (an apt symbol for a guide and teacher) and old comrade, reminds him of this duty and curiously argues like Matali; faintheartedness is proper for eunuchs and ill beseems noble princes as it brings dishonour. You say that to slay your venerable gurus would be like eating blood-sullied food, that moreover you do not know which is better, whether to be conquered or to win a bloody victory after which we should hardly wish to live, and that your very being is oppressed with the harmful taint of compassion (so commended by Buddhism). But I tell you, first, that slaying and being slayed concern only the passing and renewable body whereas the embodied atman is inaccessible to them; secondly, that nothing is better than one's own caste-duty (*svadharma*), a duty which for us, *Ksatriyas*, is to fight in just wars; such wars, indeed, open to *Ksatriyas* the doors of paradise whereas if you cast off your duty you will incur sin; thirdly, that you will besides incur a dishonour ever to be recounted by men with contempt, a disgrace reckoned among us as worse than death.

Such is their dialogue up to ii, 39 after which we enter into a more speculative sphere through a rather rash transition well noted by scholars. This transition, however, is well explained if we remark that the author has now exhausted the suggestions of the Buddhist anecdote. The relations between the latter and this initial conversation concern the structure, the arguments and the vocabulary and,

hence, appear undeniable. Yet, we are not dealing with any mere copying or clumsy imitation but with a masterful transposition.

#### 4. THE RECONCILING DHARMA REVEALED BY KRSNA

In his endeavour to restructure the dharma of India the Gitakara is altogether personal and original. Between the antinomic teachings and religious mores of his time he builds a bridge along which the succeeding generations will proceed in ever larger numbers towards their religious goal. The spans of this bridge may be reckoned as (1) a more personalistic anthropology, (2) a positive solution of the dilemma of varnaduties versus renunciation, (3) a clearer vision of *moksa* and of the "easy way" to reach it, (4) a richer and more entrancing presentation of God.

#### Personalistic Anthropology

At least six anthropologies could claim the Gitakara's attention. They were the *vedic-brahmanic* view of man as a personal being integrated within the hierarchical society of the complementary varnas and linked through sacrifice to the devas at the service of *rta*; the *upanisadic* theory of man as *nama-rupa* internally moved and pervaded by the Ground of the universe, the Brahman-Atman; the popular religions' view of man as the devotee of a god such as Narayana-Visnu or Vasudera-Krsna; the Sankhya conception of man as a conscious but inactive Purusa who should realise his isolation from Prakrti and her gunas; the similar *Jaina* theory of man as a Jiva who should through renunciation and non-violence dematerialise and

dekarmanise himself so as to recover his natural omniscience; and the *Buddhistic* analysis of man as a mere flux of five skandhas.

Rejecting the last two, the Gitakara opts for the *Sankhya* conception which he, however, enriches with the help of the first three anthropologies mentioned above.

Man is a *dehin* in a *deha*, an embodied self in a body. The *dehin* is eternal and stands beyond the reach of birth and death (though man himself is born and dies;) "he engenders neither agency nor worldly works nor the bond of work with fruit" (5, 14); but as their experience he is called *kestrajna*, the knower of the field. This field is *Prakrti* in which he is lodged through his body, both gross and subtle. The domain of *Prakrti* is change and activity. "She is the cause of effect, effector and effectation (*karya-karana-kartṛtva*) while *Purusa* is said to be the cause in the experience (*bhokṛtva*) of pleasures and pains" (13, 20). Since *Prakrti* is identical with her three functional aspects, the *gunas* *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, it is they who make man cling to the world of actions and fruits. "That *guna* which predominates at the time of his death determines his next birth. But when the watching (*Purusa*) sees that there is no agent other than these *gunas* and knows what is beyond them, then will he come to that mode of being which is Mine," says *Kṛṣṇa* (14, 19).

These words usher in the second element that goes to make the synthetic anthropology of the *Gita*, namely, man's dependence on the Divinity. Indeed, the *Sankhya* which inspires the Gitakara

is theistic somewhat in the manner of the Svetasvatara Upanisad. It gives him the basis needed to assert against the Buddhists not only the existence in man of an immortal *Atman* (*dehin*, *Purusa*) but further the immanence in all of a transcendent *Paramatman* soon to be identified as *Purusottama Krsna*.

Indeed, "Prakrti is mine," says Krsna (4, 6). She is the "great (but lower) brahman" (*mahad brahma*) of which he is the basis (14, 27), the womb in which he plants the seed (14, 3), the field of which he is the *Ksetrajna* (13, 2). This great Brahman comprises not only *prakrti* as defined above but also the conscious *Atmans* which as such can be said to be "minute parts" (*amsa*) of Krsna (15, 7). Thus in this lower Brahman each man is situated both by his active body which is a formation of *Prakrti*, and by his *Atman* which is the inactive seer and experiencer inhabited and ruled by the *Paramatman*, Krsna. Hence, he is totally dependent on the latter.

It is interesting to note how the unpromising Sankhya dualism has been surmounted here, first, by introducing the notion of *mahad Brahman* (recalling the *Brahma-cakra* of Svetasvatara Up.) which unites material nature and the conscious *Atmans*, and then subjecting this enlarged *Prakrti* to the total domination of Krsna. The unity brought about by this solution remains still extrinsic on the level of the creaturely essence but becomes intrinsic on the entelological level of its dependent existence. This reminds us of Descartes' solution to the same problem, perhaps not suprisingly since



he also starts from a strongly asserted dualism of the human essence. More importantly, let us note the centrality of this doctrine for the synthetic anthropology of the Gitakara. As will be shown immediately, it allows him to reconcile the antinomic notions of man as, on the one hand, a *yajamana* and *karmin*, and, on the other hand, a *jnanin* and *tyagin*, so that man can by the whole of himself be a *bhakta*.

Despite the fact that the *dehin* in man is essentially a knower (*ksetrajna*) and a passive experiencer, man is by divine ordination a sacrificer (*yajamana*) and a performer of divinely appointed varna-duties. How can he thus be *karmin* (agent)! Because through his *deha* he is necessarily engaged in the activity of Prakrti through which the Lord is ever active. However since he is not his *deha*, he is also not the original source of this activity but only its occasion. Hence, he is not to attribute to himself either actions or their fruits but with a renounced mind refer and offer them to the Lord, their true source through Prakrti. Through this reference and offering, he becomes both a renouncer (*tyagin*) and a *bhakta*.

The next sections will enlarge on all this. What we may say by way of conclusion is that the Gitakara's anthropology is a religious personalism whose axis of integration of man with the whole of himself and of his world is his dimension of total existential dependence upon the transcendent Lord whose absolute Reality indwells every creaturely being as well as the whole universe.

## (2) RECONCILIATION OF ACTION WITH RENUNCIATION

Renunciatoin as proposed in the Upanisads tended already to devalue *caturvarnya* and ritualistic Brahmansim but only within the area of influence of the upanisadic wisdom. However, when preached on a large scale and organised along monastic lines by the brahmanic movements, it began to present a real threat to the sacral brahmanic society. The Gitakara was keenly aware of this but he also perceived that the value of renunciation could not simply be opposed for it had gained favour with a majority of the population. His quite original solution was to insert renunciation within the framework of dharma-prescribed activities. What was to be renounced was not action itself but its fruit, and even not its fruit itself but the selfish desire which attached man to it.

This is akin to but distinct from, the Buddhistic solution. It had been said that Jina, like a dog, attacked the arrow that tortured him thus increasing his pain (through austerities) whereas Buddha, like a lion, attacked the hunter (*trsna*, thirst) that had hit him. But Buddha ultimately favoured retirement from society and contemplation in passivity. Krsna disarmed the hunter Desire (*kama*) but far from confining the lion to a cave he gave him the freedom of the forest to pursue his natural and traditional activities. Let us examine the elements of this superior solution.

(a) Complete renunciation is an impossibility. First because "each man is made to work by the gunas born of Prakrti" (3, 5), and because works

are the energy that keeps the cosmic wheel turning (cf. 3, 14-16). Second, because men are bound to imitate God who always works selflessly for the maintenance of the world (cf. 3, 20-24).

(b) The obligatory works are generally: sacrifice, gift, ascetic practice (18, 5) and, for each individual, the duties of his own caste since the system of the four varnas (*caturvarnya*) has been generated by Krsna himself (4, 13). Let us avert to the Brahmanic conservatism of this recall of the old dharma but only to note immediately Krsna's singular enlargement of the notion of sacrifice in 4, 25-30. There he reckons eight forms of sacrifice which range from the vedic sacrifice to the devas through the upanishadic forms of self-restraint (*samyama*) and Brahmacarya up to diverse kinds of pranayama and yoga, ultimately to assert in 4, 33 the superiority of the sacrifice of wisdom in which all works find their consummation.

(c) However, all actions bind man to rebirth. The idea of a link between sacrificial works and their results goes back to the Vedas. In the Upanisads this conception is extended to all actions and ushers in the idea of rebirth. It is then radicalised by Jainism and Buddhism and so popularised that it becomes henceforth a permanent element of the Indian psyche. The Gitakara accepts it but links it with his idea of Prakrti as the power of the Lord. The law of *karma-phala-punarjanma* (action-fruit-rebirth) is the exact expression of the expansion of Prakrti, and expansion the infinite complexity of which makes him speak of Prakrti as the uncanny power (*maya*) of the Lord who, like a puppet-

master twirls all beings hither and thither through this maya (18, 61).

(d) *Kama-krodha* (desire-anger) is the binding element in action. The Buddha, before proposing a remedy against the bondage of man by action, had found it necessary to expose the springworks of action in his teaching of "sequential organisation" (*pratitya-samutpada*). Likewise, the Gitakara in order to free man from bondage determines the sequence which leads to it;

Let a man but think of the objects of the senses, attachment (*sanga*) to them is born; from attachment springs desire (*kama*); from desire is anger (*krodha*) born; from anger comes bewilderment (*sammoha*); from bewilderment wandering of the memory-mind (*smrti-vibhrama*); from mental wandering destructoin of the intellect (*buddhi-nasa*) once the intellect is destroyed the man is lost. (2, 62-63)

(e) Hence, desire-anger should be counteracted where it lurks; in the senses, mind and intellect, where it smothers wisdom and fools the dehin (of 3, 37-40). Restraint of the senses, control of the mind, self-determination and singleness of the intellect constitutes *yoga*.

Yoga, indeed, is "the unlinking of the link with suffering and pain which must be yoked up by means of firm resolve and mind undismayed" (6. 23). Let us note the Buddhistic flavour of this definition of *buddhi-yoga*. However the Gitakara far from considering this as the highest form of integration has already proposed another definition to which he gives the greatest importance; "Yoga is skill in

performing works (*karmasu kausalam*)" (2, 50). This is the famous yoga of *niskama karma*, activity deprived of its element of selfish desire. The Gitakara's original invention, it unites work with its opposite, *naiskarmya* (cf. especially 4, 16-20). Its superiority is presented in a modest but definite way: "Renouncing works [like a sannyasin or a *bhikksu*]—or performing them [like a *karma-yogin*]—both lead to the highest goal; but of the two to engage in works is more excellent than to renounce them . . . So apply yourself to only one whole-heartedly and win the fruit of both" (5, 2-4).

What is this fruit of both yogas? "Upon this *yogin* whose mind is stilled the highest joy descends; passion laid to rest, free from stain, he is a *Brahma-bhuta*" (6,27). *Brahma-bhuta* is a stock phrase in the Pali canon where it is said of *Buddhas* and *arhats* to signify that they have attained the full enlightenment of *nirvana*. To the *Buddhists* who do not believe in the *upanishadic Brahman*, it means "most excellent" understood according to their *dharma*. To *Brahmins*, it recalls the phrase *Brahma bhavati* of *Br. Ar. Up.*, 4, 4, 25 and *Mund. Up.*, 3,2,9. The Gitakara, prompted by this double source, uses it to mean "the man who has reached that *Brahman* which is *nirvana*," that is that stillness, sameness, infinity to which perfect yoga leads (cf. 5, 24-26). This, however, is not yet the absolutely final goal since *Arjuna* must reach *Krsna* who "is the basis of *Brahman*" (14, 27).

(f) The *niskama-karma-yogin* must be intent on *Krsna*. Detachment is rarely complete if it remains merely a negative process but put at the service of



a positive will and love it becomes easy and successful. Indeed.

The objects of the senses turn away from the dehin who ceases to feed on them; but the taste for them remains.

Even this taste fades away when the Supreme (or the Other, *Para* is seen (2.59).

If you fix your mind and intellect on Me, you will come to Me all doubts set at rest . . .

How easily am I won by him who bears Me in mind unceasingly, thinking of nothing else . . .

The highest Person is to be won by *bhakti* directed to none other (cf. 8. 5-22).

Why this *bhakti* should be directed on Krsna becomes clear with the teaching that He is the true object of all sacrifices and actions even those directed to other gods or goals (cf. 5,29; 9.24 or the whole ch. 9; etc.).

The recourse to *bhakti* to strengthen and perfect yoga had appeared already in some of the recent Upanisads but the Gitakara gave to this teaching a definiteness and emphasis which justified his making of it the axial element of his renovated dharma. Henceforth it will become the main life stream of Indian religiosity.

### (3) Parabhakti, the Supreme Goal of Man

The idea of moksa deliverance from rebirth, as found in the Upanisads was so rich of many aspects that it was only imperfectly reduced to unity. In Jainism, it was conceived as dematerialisation and the recover of omniscience. In Sankhya, it meant isolation of the inactive Purusa. In Buddhism which

denied any Purusa or Atman, it meant nirvana, apparently a totally negative concept. The Gitakara accepted the negative aspects common to these doctrines, but as a strong Atmavadin he developed his conception of moksa along the positive lines indicated by the Upanisads including *Svet. Up.* and finally infused it with the fully explicit notion of *Parabhakti*.

His first step is to recall traditionally enough that yoga, whether it be buddhi or karma-yoga, leads to the "fixed, still state of *nirvana* which is *Brahman* too" (2, 72). *Brahma-nirvana*, a term which echoes the two competing dharmas, designates the state in which all sense-desires and passions have been overcome, and consciousness is pure of finite objects and self-assertion (this is *nirvana*), where therefore consciousness stands in the serenity, fulness and infinity which characterise the *Brahman*. The same is expressed in terms of wisdom (*jnana*) in 4, 37-39 and the bulk of ch. 5 shows that attaining wisdom and attaining *Brahman* are equivalent. However, 5, 29 introduces the connection between "reaching peace" and "knowing Me."

The second and fuller description of moksa is made in terms of *parabhakti*, the higher and perfect mutual love between the integrated man and God. This is no longer the inferior bhakti which accompanies yoga and focusses the yogin on the Lord, but the superior bhakti of mutual enjoyment and possession. That bhakti is mutual is clear from 4, 11: "In whatever way they surrender to Me, in that same way do I return their love (*bhajami*).

"That bhakti-moksa preserves and consecrates this mutuality is expressed in 6,30: "Who sees Me everywhere, who sees the whole in Me, for him I am not lost, nor is he lost to me." This is confirmed in such passages as 9, 34: "Now that you have thus integrated yourself, your striving bent on Me, to Me you will come," or 8,5-22, especially:

By meditating on the supreme divine Person, the yogin goes to Him. . . .

Joining Me such mahatmas never undergo re-birth any more. . . for they have attained the highest prize. . . He who comes right nigh to Me shall never be born again. . .

The third important notation of the Gitakara is that Parabhakti-moksa is a gift of the Lord's grace (*prasada*):

The Brahma-bhuta. . . neither grieves nor desires; the same to all beings, he gains the highest bhakti to Me.

Through this bhakti he comes to know Me as I really am, how great I am and who; and once he knows Me as I am, he enters Me forthwith. . .

By my grace he will attain to an eternal, changeless state. (18,54-56).

The sequence indicated by this text is remarkable. The state of eversameness (*samya*) attained by the Brahmabhuta is not, though it has been called Brahma-nirvana, the fulness of salvation. Indeed, the latter consists in the para bhakti which he still has to gain so as to know Krsna as He is and then enter him as the fulfilment of this process of divine grace and human response to it.

## (4) AN ADVANCED CONCEPTION OF GOD

All the previous synthetic teachings summarised so far rest ultimately on the Gitakara's richly synthetic conception of God. Essentially it consists in an advance from the concept of the Divinity as universal and mysterious (even arbitrary?). Power to its revelation as absolute source of personal love, or from Yajnavalkya's awareness of the supreme Atman as Ground of all values (Br. Ar. Up., ii, 4) and supremely lovable to Krsna's "highest word, of all the most mysterious, 'You are dear to Me. . .so you will come to Me, I promise you truly. . .I shall deliver you from all evils, have no care' (18, 64-66)." Let us now consider the successive steps of this advance.

(a) Krsna is the best in all categories of beings but they derive from but a portion of his glory. The chief text here is 10, 14-42 in which Krsna describes all the "divine far-flung manifestations (*vibhuti*) of his Self, by which He, (though) standing (unchanged), does pervade these worlds."

(b) In particular, He is the God of gods (10, 15; etc.) and the gods are but his creatures and vibhutis (10, 2 and 10, 21-30). This teaching has a triple effect: it recalls the vedic assertion that the gods are creatures; it assumes the Jaina and Buddhist conviction that they share man's ignorance and are in need of moksa; yet it praises them as vibhutis of the power and glory of the One God.

(c) Krsna is the one recipient and lord of the whole sacrificial sphere of the Sacred, as explained already. Thus all the Vadas are reassumed as well as their final upanisadic portions (15, 15).

(d) Krsna is the Lord of "great Brahman," as said in 14, 3-4 which echoes *Mund. Up.*, 3, 1. 3 and *svet. Up.* 4, 11, *Mahad-brahman* stands for Prakrti both lower and higher. Lower Prakrti comprises all bodies, gross and subtle, but higher Prakrti is *jiva-bhuta*, i.e., it comprises all the jivas or dehins (7, 5). Hence, Krsna is the Father and Lord of all dehas and dehins. They are him but He is not in them. They are the sphere of maya and subject to ignorance. But He knows and rules over them all (ck. ch. 7).

(e) Krsna is the Purusa whose home is the Unmanifest beyond the unmanifest. This is said probably to assume the Sankhya strand of *Katha Up.*, 6, 7-8, which is reformulated carefully in 8, 20-22.

(f) Krsna is the Imperishable beyond *ksara* and *Aksara*. The main passages relevant here are 8,1-5; 12,1-7; and 15,16-18. The question is to reassume the Aksara tradition of *Br.Ar.Up.* 3,8,8-9 beyond the Sankhya usage of Aksara to designate either Prakrti or the Purusas. This is done in the manner of *Mund.Up.* 2,1,1-2 ("the Purusa is beyond the imperishable") or of *Svet.Up.*, 1,8-10 ("the one God Hara rules both *ksara* and *Aksara*, nature and the self").

(g) Krsna is the basis of the *nirvana-brahman*. We have already alluded to this hybrid notion which uses *brahman* no longer in a sacral or in an ontological sense but as a yogic term. Why should the goal of yoga, the nirvana of Buddhism, be called *Brahmi-sthiti* or even *Brahman*? We find the answer in 5,19-24:



Devoid of imperfection and ever-the-same is *Brahman*; therefore, he whose intellect is stilled and who has overcome confusion, is a knower of *Brahman*, standing in *Brahman* (*Brahma-stha*) . . . This yogin, being a *Brahmabhuta* draws near to *Brahma-nirvana*.

However, "that peace which culminates in nirvana subsists in Me," says Kṛṣṇa (6,15).

For I am the basis supporting *Brahman* (*brahmano hi pratistha 'ham*), the immortal, the unchanging, and (supporting) too the eternal *Dharma* and the Joy which is absolute (14,27).

(h) Kṛṣṇa is manifested as *Narayana* (*Viṣṇu*). How can man recognise God unless He is manifested as Power, cosmic and absolute? Hence, to the theophany of ch. 11 the universal figures of *Narayana* and, secondarily, *Viṣṇu*, or of *kāla* (time that cooks all beings) and the awesome *Rudra* provide the *visva-rupa* necessary to manifest the strictly indescribable and unmanifest Lord. It manifests him as *Hari*, the great Lord of Yoga. This alludes to the two forms of yoga explained earlier. No doubt, "this form of Mine is awful and grim," says Kṛṣṇa, but now "banish all fear, be glad at heart for, behold, here is now only My (familiar, human) form. And once again He assumed the body of a friend (*saumya-vapu*)" (11,49-50).

This shows that awe-inspiring theophanies are not for mortal men the best access to God. God in simple human form is more revealing to us of the profound mystery of his loving essence than the most amazing imagery of his cosmic power.

(i) Kṛṣṇa is God born as man. It is, indeed,

only in his human form, "friendly-and-kind," or like Buddha "faintly smiling" (2,10) that He comforts Arjuna or confides to him the entrancing secret of his love for his devotees.

By the middle of the 3d century B.C., the people of India had already experienced the charm of great human teachers of salvation. In such Mahaviras as Jina and especially Gautama Buddha they saw paragons of sramanic virtues such as we find in Krsna's portrait of the perfect man (12,13-20; 14,22-26; 16,1-5). Buddha was commonly called Sattha (Teacher) and Bhagava, and the belief had already taken root that his historical birth was only the seventh after six "earlier habitations" (*purva nivasa*) or former births (*jataka*) in which he had preached his dharma according to the same pattern of events (cf. *Mahapadana Suttanta* of *Digha Nikaya*).

To counteract his influence and retain the people within the Brahmanic fold, what could be better than the Gitakara's idea? To take up a human hero, Krsna, already legendary and revered among the Vrsnis, to make him a teacher of *dharma*, both in the Brahmanic and—as far as possible—in the Buddhistic sense, to have him teach a yoga or method of attaining moksa which would include renunciation as well as action but subsume them under *bhakti*. Then to explain that his many past births were all for the sake of reestablishing dharma (rather than reaping the fruit of former lives). Finally, to explain the sublime disinterestedness of his births by revealing him to be the divine *Purusottama*, Hari, the Lord (*Isvara*) the God

(*Deva*), the Distributor of divine wealth (*Bhagavan*). In this divine as well as human Person, the traditional mercy of the teacher would be the compassion of God himself. It would express the deepest mystery (*sarvaguhyatama*: 18,64) of his loving nature beyond the indeterminateness of the Brahman so far discovered by man.

This, is, indeed, what we find, first clearly in 4, 4-9 and then orchestrated throughout the rest of the Gita. This well-known passage proclaims several important things: (a) the fact of Kṛṣṇa's present and past births, (b) the simultaneous fact that as God He remains unborn and changeless, (c) the sovereign freedom of his births which He brings about through his own Prakṛti, (d) the pure, disinterested motive of these births which is *dharma-samsthana*, which, in the Brahmanic sense, means the reassertion of the Law, and in the Buddhistic sense, the teaching of the true Doctrine of salvation, (e) the salvific effect of acknowledging with faith and love his birth, works and words as divine, which is, never to be born again and to come to him.

(j) Finally, not to omit any important aspect of this synthetic view of God as identically personal and absolute, let us record that Kṛṣṇa as the *Pramatman* of all is One only (13, 30-33; etc.), the Source of change but himself changeless and imperishable (11, 18; etc.), the Creator of the universe, immanent through his activity in all beings, but surpassing and transcending all (9, 4-6; etc.), the all-knowing Witness (9, 18) who knows himself by his self (10, 15), the all-powerful (11, 40; etc.) omnipresent Lord.

Above all, He is *Purusottama*, the Supreme-Person. The term *Purusa* is not identical with our term "person" but approaches it in meaning. If originally it means "male" and thus often "man" and then "entity," it tends in the various trends of Sankhya to mean exclusively "spirit," pure principle of awareness (*jna*), spiritual monad. In the Gita, it is used sometimes as "entity," more often as *Jiva*, *Atman*, intellectual monad in man, *dehin*; then, with some adjective like supreme, primeval, divine, eternal abiding, to designate God himself as perfect spirit, knowing and loving Subject, Person in the most elevated sense of the term. This is the Lord who tells Arjuna, "I love you well. . . Turn to Me, your only refuge [both an echo and a refutation of Buddhism]" (18, 64-66). He is the Lord who, as Samjaya says, "revealed all this in person" (*saksat*, directly) (18, 75).

### Conclusion

For lack of precise dates and definite literary references but often also for extra scholarly reasons and allegiances, writers on the Gita have often been shy of exploring thoroughly the whole historical and literary context of this epoch-making masterpiece. The above attempt at circumscribing its aim and scope, its background, religious landscape, and the full extent of its redefinition of *dharma* will, I hope, throw a new light on it as time-bound, history-making and a transmuter of Indian religions.

# The Vision of God

Prof B. R. Kulkarni

The Summum Bonum of every religion is liberation by whatever name it may be called—salvation, Nirvana or Kaivalya. There may be religions like Jainism and Buddhism which are professedly atheistic and which posit the highest ideal as the flight of the alone to the alone or complete annihilation of the ego which is heir to passions and insatiable desires and which consequently suffers transmigration. But even such religions could not do without God. Though the founders posited no God, the followers raised the founders themselves to the status of God. As it is aptly put, the nemesis of the denial of God is the apotheosis of the founder. If religion is natural to man, then it follows that he believes in something—may be God, an overplus, the Divine More, the Cosmic principle or some supernatural entity which sustains him and from which he draws inspiration.

Belief has a great potential power. That is what William James stresses in his book, *Will to Believe*. Believe, he advises us; because if you believe in God and even if no such God exists, no harm will come from your belief. On the other hand, if He exists, you would have done your duty in believing him. And it will save you from an anomalous position of not believing if He exists. Even such



a pragmatic approach has its own advantages; belief gives you strength and hope and, as James says, what you believe may come to be true. Why not let it be God; why not hang your faith on him; why not identify salvation itself with the vision of God as the Vedanta Sutras have done? पुरुषार्थोऽत एव (III.4.1): Vision itself is Purusartha, the bonum supremum and the bonum consummatum, the highest ideal and the complete ideal joined together.

The vision of God is the ultimate goal of all our spiritual endeavour. Our prayers and our vigils, our fasts, our meditation and concentration, our moral pursuits and devout utterance of his name, have one aim, namely, vision of Reality or the direct, first-hand, intuitive experience of God.

Obviously the state of liberation-cum-realisation cannot be attained unless man has the requisite moral and spiritual preparation. Moral life is not merely a precondition for entering into spiritual life but it is indispensable for spiritual progress and attainment of the highest goal. An immoral religious man is inconceivable morality being the foundation, centering and scaffolding of the spiritual edifice. The essential ingredient of moral life is the practice of virtues and avoidance of vices. As Professor R. D. Ranade points out, the parallelism between the ten virtues enunciated in Yoga philosophy and the ten commandments in Exodus and Deuteronomy is striking.

In the Gita, which Lokamanya Tilak calls the book of Hindu Ethics and Religion, there is repeated discussion of moral virtues. Even a glance at

the 13th chapter of the Gita will open out a galaxy of virtues like modesty, non-violence, forbearance, uprightness, service of the teacher, steadfastness, self-control, detachment from the object of sense, self-effacement, constant evenness of mind and unswerving devotion to God through constant meditation. Next, the divine heritage described in the 16th chapter includes virtues like charity, fearlessness, truth, tranquillity and compassion. The perorative refrain of the 12th chapter where also we come across a catalogue of virtues is that he who is a devotee is dear to God proving that God-devotion is the Supreme virtue. In fact Professor Ranade notes that God-devotion or bhakti is the central virtue round which all other virtues are woven and from which they draw sustenance.

### 1. SELF-EFFORT AND GRACE

The moral ground thus prepared, the seed must be sown to reap the harvest of God-vision. Meditation on the name of God is *sine qua non* for the vision of God. One-pointed or intense concentration (*ekagrata*) and that too carried on till the end of life, continuously and with full devotion are factors in the methodology of meditation. With every breath we should utter the name of God. Similarly Ignatius Loyola asks us to intervene between our inhalation and exhalation the prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. . ."

By mere self-effort we would not be able to have the vision of God. In spite of our leading a moral life and carrying on our devotional pursuits, our efforts may not bring us the desired goal without

the element of Grace. God must grant us the Divya Caksu or the divine eye to behold his sovereign power. Even in cases of creative thinking whether in the field of science, poetry or art, an element of *illumination* is necessary. We know that mere accumulation of facts or incubation does not lead to inventions without that added element, call it intuition, inspiration or the eureka experience which defies rational explanation. In the field of religion we call it grace. It descends on him who is chosen by God, the elect and leads him further Godward. The aspirant in his humility feels that the vision is not due to his effort but something imparted to him. But this does not mean that one should idle away one's life or belittle the importance of self-effort. One must toil and knock at the door; it is upto Him to open the door for the devotee.

Though there is no rationale of divine grace or any limit to the grace abounding, we may venture to state that one must deserve grace by self-effort. We must ascend so that God descends. In fact self-effort and grace are related by reciprocal causation, each being the cause of the other. Unless there is effort, Grace will not come to us; and unless grace is there, no genuine effort can even be begun. A. E. Taylor in his remarkable Gifford Lectures, "Faith of a Moralists," points out that it is God who puts us on the spiritual path. Taylor calls this the initiative of the Eternal. If this is true even of the beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage, what to say of its growth and culmination?

The 11th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita provides

us with one of the finest descriptions of the vision of God in the literature of the world. In the words of Rudolf Otto: "And now in Chapter Eleven there follows a theophany of terrific grandeur, which seeks to give a feeling of the unapproachable essence of the Divine before which the creature trembles and falls, by embodying the human and natural means of terror, majesty and sublimity."

The vision of God which Arjuna had was dazzling; it combined in itself the splendour of a thousand suns shining simultaneously. It was a terrific form of the Lord of life and death displaying fangs crushing the armies to death and licking with the hungry tongue. The same terrific vision is described in Job 9:34—"Let not his fear terrify me." There is a kind of inward shuddering having a paralysing effect. Otto calls this experience the *mysterium tremendum* and says that besides having an element of awe-fulness it contains that of overpoweringness or majesty and energy or vitality. But the vision of God cannot be said to be merely fearful; it is tranquil, beautiful and glorious. That is why it gives rise to contradictory emotions like fear and joy. Its overpowering nature strikes us with awe, while its sublimity enkindles ineffable joy.

Further, the "vision" is not confined to visual experience, but resembles the experience of all the senses, though the actual experience is supra-sensuous. Thus there is an auditory experience, the *Anahata Nada* or the unstruck music of the Infinite and there are experiences of smell, taste and touch. Mirabai and Jnaneswara, as also Mahalingaranga

and Mahipati speak of God as Amolika Ratna of Vastu, the invaluable jewel of Reality.

There is also an experience of Jesus when He was baptised: He saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John, there was a cloud that overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud saying: This is my beloved son: hear him (Mark 9:2 and 7). Or when he was in deep agony, there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him (St. Luke 22: 42 and 43). The revelation of Saint John the Divine combines the experience of light, sound and touch. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice as of trumpet. . .and I turned to see the voice that spake with me. . .his eyes were as a flame of fire. . .he laid his right hand upon me. . ." We also know that Bunyan saw with the eyes of his soul the beatific vision of Jesus Christ standing at God's right hand.

## 2. SUPER-SENSUOUS EXPERIENCES

In many a saint we come across the experience of ambrosia or the Divine Juice, *Amrita Rasa* or *Ramarasa* on which he is fed and which induces God-intoxication. Energy to live by comes from God. Thus there are, to quote Professor Ranade again, morphic (pertaining to form), photic (pertaining to light) and phonic (pertaining to sound) experiences, to mention only a few.

And in spite of all these specific experiences resembling the sense experience, they are not sensuous but are super-sensuous. The senses are



not involved in these experiences; they originate from within. This is proved in two ways. First such an experience can be had without a sense organ; one sees without an eye and hears without an ear: *Pasyati acaksuh sa srunoti akarnah*, says the Upanisad. Secondly we have evidence from saintly literature that a saint could see with his ears or taste with his eyes. In our empirical experience we see with our eyes and hear with our ears. But in supersensuous experience, there is transference of sensefunctions. So the eye may hear and the ear may taste. The reason is that these experiences are explained only through the unity of apperception, that is the Self. It is not the eye that sees but the self; it is not the ear which hears but the self. The saint, filled with God, becomes the recipient of supersensuous experience of which the world knows nothing. This experience exalts him as well as humbles him. He is elated to have the vision and bows humbly before it. This is the emotion of *Achtung* by which, says Kant, we can have a peep into the world which transcends sensibility. To quote C. D. Broad: "On such occasions the being, who from his mixed nature belongs both to the world of sense and to the suprasensible world, is getting a peep, and the only direct peep which he can get in this life, into the latter. This glimpse humbles and even frightens him, in so far as his nature is partly animal and sensuous. Yet, at the same time, it exalts him, in so far as his nature is fundamentally rational by reminding him that he is a citizen of the suprasensible world."

The saints tell us that God's form transcends

time; it has existed from all eternity. It fills all space; wherever the spiritual aspirant casts his eye, there he sees the form of God. Arjuna had the good fortune of experiencing such cosmic vision or *Viswarupa*. Both time and space are thus appropriated by God.

God has infinite forms and what form He will condescend to reveal to us, we cannot say. If He pleases, He may bestow on us the vision of any form.

Further, these supersensuous experiences are ineffable. They cannot be expressed by words of mouth. Expression presumes a duality; experience presupposes a unity, says Professor R. D. Ranade. So experience cannot be attained by expression.

### 3. EFFECTS OF GOD-VISION

We may now turn our attention to the multifarious effects of God-vision—physiological, psychological, moral and mystical.

As a consequence of the vision of God the senses lose their hold on mind and the mind becomes tranquil; the body becomes almost a dynamo of energy. The actions done by such a man are necessarily for the good of the society. Though he is very active, he is not contaminated by the fruits of action because his actions are disinterested.

The saint does not necessarily cease to act; but selfish activity with likes and dislikes altogether vanishes for him. Morality becomes natural to him and no effort need be made for the practice of virtues. He invariably acts in the right way. When in the state of *samadhi* he need not act; but when

he comes back to the empirical world (*Vyutthana*) or "profane states," he has to act and he does act and necessarily his actions are right.

As to the mystical effect, multiplicity and differentiation come to an end, for the saint sees God everywhere. Every excellence reminds him of God:

यद्यद्विभूतिमत् सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव दा ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽंशसंभवम् ॥ —Gita. X

Whatever being there is, endowed with grandeur, beauty or strength—know that it has sprung only from a spark of my splendour. True immortality really consists in God-vision. The more experiences he has the more he becomes attached to God. This is true *bhakti* or as the Gita calls it *Parabhakti*. It must be remembered that God-vision is a matter of progress. Not perfection but progress, not realisation but approximation is what is given to man, the finite creature.

The devotees of God constitute a blessed society; being denizens of *civitas dei* or *Rama Prema pura*, they have transcended all differences of caste, creed, colour, race or nationality and stand, all of them, as creatures before God, the ultimate Reality. They proclaim the same message; to use Spinoza's words: "the intellectual love of man for God is the love with which God loves Himself and is one and the same as the love of God to man which is the same as love of man for man. Blessedness is not the reward of our striving for social good but is social good itself."

# Experience: Anubhava as Pramana

Dr. S. W. Bakhle

I propose in this paper in the first place to analyse the nature of experience and then go on to consider it as a means of valid knowledge (*Pramana*). I will lay stress more on experience as a *Pramana* rather than experience *per se*. I hope to show that experience as a means of valid knowledge has a limited scope and one has to rely on other means of valid knowledge such as inference. Experience, in other words cannot take us very far in acquiring valid knowledge. In trying to show this I will have strict philosophical bias, epistemological, to be precise, and will not enter into its psychological or religious side. I will have occasion in the course of my argument to refer to Dr. Rudolf Steiner's views as also to the Gita's views that are relevant for my purpose.

From the time of Descartes there has been a variety of competing theories of perception. However, there were certain general presuppositions to which almost all subscribed. And these seemed to pose the main problem that the differing doctrines were intended to solve. First, it was generally supposed that human knowledge in general had a stratified or layer-like character—that at least it had and must have foundations, and hence it was

the business of the philosopher to identify and narrowly scrutinize these foundations and then show how what passes for knowledge was or could be securely supported upon them. It was of course further supposed by most that perception as the exercise of the human senses at least contributed largely and fundamentally to human knowledge. But, second, it was also almost universally supposed that perception like knowledge itself, was a stratified affair—that here too there was and must be a basis, a species of data, and distinct from this are those inferences, constructions, interpretations which are expressed in the relatively high level of judgments of perception of everyday life.

If we agree for the sake of argument that perception figures largely and fundamentally in the acquisition of knowledge, then the following philosophical questions can be raised about perception. What are the data of perception? How do we build upon them? What is the nature of those entities of which, in perceiving, we are basically, directly, immediately aware? How is this immediate awareness itself to be characterized? And then, by what process must it be considered, by what kind of inference construction or interpretation do we pass from awareness of data to our ordinary but complex perceptual awareness of and judgments about the world and its contents?

More fundamental than these questions will be the questions about the extreme complexity of the subject-matter itself, namely, perception. For "perception" is not after all some single, unitary phenomenon. We have not one sense but several senses.



These differ widely among themselves and also in their "objects" and typical modes of exercise. We make, on the basis of employing one or more of our senses, judgments of immensely various kinds varying with our capacities, with our aims or interest, with the circumstances of particular cases, with our expectations, with our state of hesitation and confidence, and in many other ways. Then, again, "perception," "experience," "sensing," "observing" seem to be synonymous. The question is: are they synonymous or not? Further, how is perception different from "dreaming," ESP like Telepathy, "clairvoyance," "mystic experience," "Religious experience," "intuition," "revelation" and the like? And how do the latter differ from the former and from each other. How again, these two types differ from "illusions" and "hallucination"?

Let me begin with the definition of perception which will give us its "bare minimum." And here we will consider the definition given by samkhya system of Indian Philosophy. As we know, perception is called *Drstam* or *Pratyaksa* and is defined as प्रतिविषयाध्यवसायः which has two major words प्रतिविषय (relation to object) and अध्यवसाय (determination). Simply put, it would mean determination of the nature of object by its relation to the senses. It is clear from this definition that in any situation of perception there must be (1) the object, (2) the sense, (3) the relation of the object and the sense and (4) the determination of the nature of the object. If any of these four factors is missing there cannot be a case of perception.

## 1. WAKING EXPERIENCES AND DREAMS

Again, according to Samkhya, perception is in two stages which are known as Savikalpa (determinate) and Nirvikalpa (indeterminate). At the first contact of the senses with the object the perception is indeterminate and after some time the perception becomes determinate. It should be stressed at this stage that "determination" or "determining" or "making certain," is the most important factor in perception. It is this factor which distinguishes perception as a source of valid knowledge from illusions or hallucinations or even intuition and revelation. Thus when I say "I perceive the table," it is not merely the case that the sense, namely, the eye and the object, namely the table are related, but is also the case that the nature of table is determined by my intellect. I am certain that I "perceive" the table, and not I "dream" of table; neither have I an "illusion" or "hallucination" of it. The intellect determines the nature of the object like table with the help of the categories of time, space and causality. Naturally, therefore, perception which involves determination as its essential characteristic is different from "dreaming" which does not involve determination. And since the arguments which can be put forward to distinguish "perception" from "dreaming" can with equal force be applied to distinguish perception from "intuition" or "revelation," it will be worth our while to consider these arguments in some detail.

What makes us call a dream a dream? What is

our *criterion*? In fact, is there any criterion for calling a particular experience as a "dream" experience as distinguished from "waking" experience?

Let us proceed to consider those which are sensible, sober and reasonable. How do they differ from similar waking experiences? If, for instance, I dream this night—or the night before—of this symposium in exactly the same way as I am experiencing it just now, then how do I know? What is my criterion of judging that the experience I am having at present is waking experience and not a dream experience? If we say that I am not asleep just now and hence it is waking experience, then how will we distinguish it from what is called a "day-dream" in which man is not asleep? If, again, we say that it is the nature of the experience that will distinguish waking from dream experience, then what is such a nature? How do we describe, how do we identify such a nature? The only way in which we can distinguish the two types of experience is to say that waking experience is publicly shareable, objective and verifiable while dream experience is private, subjective and unverifiable. Such a difference will also clear the point that dream experience cannot be the source of valid knowledge in the same way as waking experience can be. It may be a source of knowledge, but not of *valid* knowledge. Validity of knowledge depends upon some truth conditions which are sufficient and necessary. These conditions must be fulfilled before we judge a particular case of knowledge as valid. And as pointed out earlier, such

conditions to make experience a valid knowledge are shareability, objectivity and verifiability.

It is obvious that sensory perception as distinguished from dreams, illusions etc., on the one hand and intuitive, clairvoyant knowledge on the other fulfils these conditions of valid knowledge.

With these observations on the nature of perception and its claim as a source of valid knowledge, let us consider the views of Steiner and the Gita.

Rudolf Steiner's position, if I have understood it correctly, can be put in the following statements:

1. The concepts and ideas of ordinary life have supersensible nature.
2. Such a supersensible nature can be known by clairvoyant cognition.
3. Clairvoyant cognition is possible in dream consciousness.
4. Dream consciousness is both ordinary as well as supersensible. As he says: Thus on the one hand we have the dream world permeated by the reminiscences of ordinary life, by the pictures of daily life and on the other hand we have a world similar to the dream region, but in it we have new experiences, true real experiences of which we can only say that they are a true kind of experience of the other spiritual worlds. But one condition must be fulfilled if we want to have these new experiences when we are half asleep at night. We must be able to shake off the reminiscences of daily life, the pictures of daily life. So long as these interplay in dream region, so long do they make themselves necessary, and

hinder the true experiences of the higher world from coming in (P. 5, Lect. III).

5. Thus there are three worlds: (1) the physical world, (2) the dream world, and (3) the higher world.

6. In the higher worlds, perception is not by means of sense-organs but soul-organs.

7. One expresses what is experienced supersensibly by clothing it in colours and words that are taken out of the sense world. Only one does not get this (the supersensible experience) with the ordinary intellect, but a higher soul-perception goes through the whole process (P. 5, Lect. VI).

In this general background Steiner's position about the *Gita* can be put in the following statements:

1. Krsna of the *Gita* is in fact Krsna-impulse.

2. Whence did the Krsna-impulse come? The Krsna-impulse comes into the human soul when the latter gathers and drives out more and more from increasing depths of its inner being in order to be able to climb into these regions where Krsna may be reached.

3. Then something came to humanity which men could never have attained from themselves, something that from the opposite side binding itself to each separate one.

4. The souls that were isolating themselves met in a *collective Being*, who from outside the universe came out of the cosmos to meet the age of self-consciousness as something not which man can reach through isolated work but which belongs to the whole of humanity, the earth collectively.



5. In short, the Krsna-impulse formed into the world for each human soul, and the Christ-impulse formed into the earth for the whole of humanity.

6. In the course of human history, there occurred a definite incarnation—this same soul of Krsna incarnated later really in “a boy;” thus was incarnated in the body of the Jesus Child of the Luke Gospel that which is signified by the Krsna impulse, namely, the impulse to human self-consciousness.

7. Thus Krsna-root was concretely in the inner being of a single individual, in Luke’s Jesus-child, grew with him and remained under the surface of his existence continuously, after the *Zarathustra* soul had taken up its abode in this special body, Jesus of Matthew Gospel.

8. Both one-sided currents, that of Lucifer and that of Krsna had in a sense to find their unity in the Christ-current.

9. And because Christ has taken Krsna for his own soul-covering through which he then works on further; therefore, in the light which is shown here, in Christ himself, there is all that was once upon a time contained in the sublime Gita.

Against this whole position of Steiner I have some questions:

1. What additional purpose is served by making the ordinary concepts supersensible? I think the nature of the ordinary concepts can very well be understood as they are, without bringing in the element of the supersensible. Thus, such an element is unnecessary and superfluous.

2. From the above position it seems that Steiner bases his whole theory of "Occultism," if I may say so, on the experiences in dreams, whether ordinary or supersensible, which he calls clairvoyant cognition. My question is what is the *criterion* that distinguishes the supersensible dreams from the ordinary dreams? After what Sigmund Freud had to say about the nature of dreams and their meaning, to cling to their supersensible nature seems to me to be a myth.

3. Steiner's thesis, or rather his hypothesis, with reference to Krsna in the Gita, namely that the Krsna-impulse has incarnated into Christ, and that too in one of the two "boys," in the other that being *Zarathustra*, seems to me open to question. Because it will be very difficult, almost impossible, to verify or establish the hypothesis. To accept it simply on the ground that Steiner had such an occult cognition is not logically tenable. In fact, the further question that crops up with reference to this hypothesis will be, after Christ in whose body did that impulse or soul incarnate?

These and similar questions may seem very elementary; to some they may seem even naive. But such questions I think will have to be considered for proper understanding of Steiner's position. It will not help us by saying, against these questions, that one will understand Steiner's views only after relevant experience. Since, in the first place, I am not able to make out which is a *relevant* experience, I am not aware of any criterion of relevance of the experience. And secondly, I can understand the meaning of the statement like "Duke and Young

successfully landed on the Descartes crater on the Moon," without actually experiencing the whole thing by actually going to the moon.

Again, I think it will not help us to solve the above problems by saying that I am really at the foot of the hill and persons like Steiner are on top and so what they from their position experience and see cannot be seen and experienced by persons like me. Agreed. But at least let those people *describe* what they experience and describe in words communicable or else those words will be as private as experience itself. And so the understanding gap which exists between these two types of people will never be bridged.

With these observations on Steiner's position let us turn to the Gita.

## 2. SUPER-SENSUOUS EXPERIENCES

Turning to the Gita, it is worth considering what Aurobindo has said about it in his *Essays on the Gita*. He says, "What is of entirely permanent value in the Gita is that which besides being universal has been *experienced*, lived and *seen* with a higher than the intellectual vision. And what is seen and experienced is described in those chapters of the Gita wherein Arjuna asks Krsna very much in the spirit of Vivekananda asking Ramakrishna to "show" him the reality which lies behind all the universe. Krsna is reported to have given Arjuna the Divya Drsti (Divine Sight) by saying, "दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः" (11.8). By such a Divine Sight Arjuna could see the true nature of the Almighty and the ultimate, the Universal Purusa, and he describes the

same, very much, again, as Vivekananda describes it after being touched by Ramakrishna. Arjuna sees him, God magnificent and beautiful and terrible, the lord of souls who has manifested in the glory and greatness of his spirit this wild and monstrous and orderly and with wonderful and sweet and terrible world and overcome with marvel and joy and fear he bows down and adores with words of awe and with clasped hands the tremendous vision, "I see," he cries, (11.15,31) "all the Gods in thy body, O God, and different companies of beings, Brahman, the creating lord seated in the Lotus, and the Rsis and the race of the divine Serpents. I see numberless arms and bellies and eyes and faces. I see thy infinite forms on every side, but see not thy end nor thy middle nor thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form universal. I see thee crowned and with thy mace and thy discus, hard to discern because thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an encompassing blaze, a sun-bright fire-bright Immeasurable. Thou art the supreme Immutable whom we have to know; thou art the high foundation and abode of the universe; thou art the imperishable guardian of the eternal laws; thou art the sempiternal soul of existence." Now, how should we understand the description of such a vision? One is inclined to agree with Aurobindo when he says: The Vision of the Universal Purusa is one of the best known and most powerfully poetic passages in the Gita; but its place in the thought is not altogether on the surface. *It is evidently intended for a poetic and revelatory symbol* and we must see how it is

brought in and for what purpose and discover to what it points in its significant aspects before we can capture its meaning.

The "vision" described is more symbolic than literal. Arjuna, in other words, does not literally see a human form having thousand hands and heads etc. His "vision," I suggest, is not due to *sight* at all. It is rather due to *insight*. It is not "seeing," but "understanding," "being convinced" of the One in the Many, of the unity in diversity. He becomes also aware of the true nature of the self as distinguished from his body. In other words, he is able to discriminate *Purusa* from *Prakrti*. And this understanding, this awareness is made possible by Krsna's teachings.

Thus the "vision" is not perception, whether sensory or supersensory, whether ordinary or occult. It is *anubhava* which is different from sensory perception and *saksatkara* (revelation). It will be fruitful, therefore, to consider how *anubhava* is distinguished from *saksatkara*, to understand whether the "vision" which Arjuna had was *anubhava* or *saksatkara*.

According to Sankara, *anubhava* is the assured conviction, the clear, undoubted awareness that one is Brahman. A man who has realised this is unaffected by agency of action or by pleasure and pain; he continues to live; but, for him this body and the world are dead, as a slough is for a snake. This way of life and behaviour have been described in the *Gita Bhasya*. Sankara also says that such a man will have no change of condition after death; he will never be connected with another body.



*Anubhava* is distinguished from *saksatkara* (vision). Indian conception of the vision, say of Brahman, is altogether different from the "vision" which other mystics had. This will be best understood if we consider the psychology of perception which was referred to earlier. When the mind comes in contact with an object through the senses it goes out through the senses, reaches the object and becomes one with it either by pervading it (according to Vacaspati School) or by taking the same form as that of the object (according to Vivarana School). Mind has no form; but assumes whatever form is presented to it by the senses. The knowledge of Brahman is immediate because Brahman is not different from oneself and a direct cognition of oneself. Thus *anubhava* means a particular mode of the mind which has for its result the intuition of Brahman. This mode of mind is awareness. *Saksatkara* means the mind taking the form of the object before it. It is not simply awareness of the object but becoming or being one with it.

Summing up, I may observe that the object of this When I stand in a row of persons and am told that I am 10th in the row, I directly apprehend myself as the 10th, because the percipient (myself) and the object of knowledge (the 10th man) are identical and the mental mode in the form of an object (here the 10th man, that is, percipient himself) are in apposition. Similarly when I who already have an awareness of myself (*anubhava*) am told that I am Brahman, there is identity between the knowledge and the known (*saksatkara*). There is direct cogni-

tion *which is not at all supernormal*; for at all times one has an awareness of oneself.

Thus, Arjuna in experiencing the divine vision had anubhava (awareness) not saksatkara (identity).

Summing up, I am observ that the object of this paper is not to dispute or challenge the bona fides of the occult or mystic experiences. We grant such experiences to those who claim them. Nor does this paper dispute that such experiences may be the source of knowledge to those persons who have them, if not to others. What this paper disputes, however, is the claim that such experiences can be a *Pramana*, a means or source of valid knowledge. It, nevertheless, holds that sensory experience (*prataksa*) can be a *Pramana* though its application is very limited in scope.

# The Modern Revolution in Christianity

Dr. J. Turner

On a subject so large and controversial as this, one that will present quite different appearances as it is seen from different aspects, it is only fair that a writer should begin by declaring his position. Let this writer then state at the outset that he is an orthodox member of the Church of England, one who likes to insist that he belongs to the Catholic if not to the Roman Catholic Church. But he must then add that grateful as he is to his Church for more things than he can describe and in particular for its creeds and its liturgy he finds nevertheless, like so many millions with him, that precious as these are they come with the passing of time, and even as his Christian faith deepens, to hold him less and less, to become in some sense if not irrelevant, certainly more remote which is only another way of saying that he too is aware of, indeed deeply affected by and involved in the gathering crisis, the *genuine revolution*, that is the life of the Christian Church, in all its main denominations, today.

Some will maintain that the changes of mood and attitude which Christianity now exhibits to the world are not really evidence of anything so large as a revolution. They would say rather that they

loom so large only because we look from so near at hand. Were we at a distance of a century or two, could we detach ourselves and preserve proper proportion, we would then see that what is happening today in the Church is nothing more than has already happened many a time in her long history. The great liner has weathered many storms and been becalmed many times in her passage through the centuries. The present storm only looks so frightening because we happen to get a feel of the wind and the waves. But it will soon pass and the ship, seaworthy as ever, will continue firmly and straight on the course she was set on before the sky turned black. Could I, abandoning the polite writer's impersonality for a personal conviction, state that I am sure the ship with her precious cargo will not founder. I am sure, however, if I may continue the metaphor, she will have to put into port for major repairs and re-fittings; for great changes in her crew and its training; and for more powerful engines. Moreover when she puts to sea again, though her general course will remain constant and her destination the same she may have to call at many more and different ports on route to pick up passengers. And, could I add, could her present officers see in her cabins and on her docks some of those who will be her passengers in the future, they might frown and wonder where and how some of these came aboard and perhaps whether they had all paid their fares.

The modern changes in the Christian Church amount, therefore, it is maintained here, to a real revolution. It is a worldwide revolution, by no

means confined to Europe or America, and it involves in more or less degrees all sects, denominations and Churches. Let it not be thought for one moment that it is regrettable that a religious faith should experience a revolution. It is rather a sign of life for it is only dead societies that do not change. That there is great danger I believe; but I am much more convinced that there is great hope. The experience for many is no doubt an agonising one; but for many more, for those who can really see the nature and the possibilities inherent in the present, this is a challenging and exciting period to be living in.

Consider a few of the names of those who in their different ways and from their personal points of view have initiated these changes or contributed to the literature describing and interpreting them in the second half of the 20th century. Other names will occur to other people, especially if they live on the continent of Europe. A dozen that occur to me are Bonhoeffer, Tillich, John Robinson, Wrenn-Lewis, Teilhard de Chardin, Kung, Raehner Marcel, Schweitzer, Bultmann, Jung. It is a curious and diverse list. An interesting thing about these men is first that diverse as they are in the nationalities they represent, in one way or another they all believe that very different emphasis and attitudes are now needed than are yet widespread. They are not all agreed, however, on what this new thinking, this modern outlook ought to be. They include Americans, Englishmen, Germans, French and Swiss and they are members of quite different churches or of no churches at all.



But what about the causes and the content of the theological crisis we are all agreed we are confronted with? A few of the key phrases, already hardened into jargon and cliché might be the quickest way to cast light on these. Some key words and phrases in England—for I am bound to see things from that rather insular view—are or were till recently all of the "Death of God," the "Absence of God," "Post-Christianity," "Life in the Post-Christian era," "Religionless Religion." And though they have a content and a connotation that extends beyond the sphere of religion in general or Christianity in particular, other characteristic words one hears nowadays are "estrangement," "alienation," "meaninglessness," "relevance," "involvement," "communication," particularly in the sense of failure of or breakdown in "communication," "love" particularly from the aspect of men's increasing failure to love, "encounter" or "meeting" with the experience once more of failure truly to come to know another person, "unreality" in the sense of the shadowy or ghost like quality, as it appears to many, of so much in western society today, or, to use a word that belongs more to the French experience of our common human western predicament, the unauthentic, the invalid quality of so much that we now call life and living.

One might characterise the crisis further from another point of view by stating on the one hand that Church attendance, grows yearly less or has till recently been growing less every year; that there have been fewer and fewer young men conscious of vocation to the priesthood, the profession-

al ministry of the Churches; that the missionary work of the various denominations abroad is more questioned and the number of volunteers declines; that fewer people it seems, say their prayers. On the other hand, and showing that the revolution is difficult to describe in simple terms, there were never so many religious books, periodicals, brochures, papers, never so many Church conferences, religious assemblies, gatherings, meetings, groups to discuss this or protest about that. There never was, though of course this is the easy sort of statement one can neither prove or disprove the truth of so much discussion of religion by non-religious people. And again, one hears at a time when church congregations fall in the countries of Europe, of vast numbers of conversions to Christianity in Indonesia and South America, and of the spread like forest fires in some places of the Pentecostalist Churches.

### PROTESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT

But if we are going to study this new phenomenon satisfactorily we must examine more thoroughly some of the principal attitudes in which it expresses itself. Here again one must add, so inevitable is subjectivity in the treatment of it that not in a long book much less in the brief limits of a paper could one be exhaustive. Aspects of our theme exhibit themselves differently not so much by way of sects, denominations or churches as by racial or personal temperament and by age, education, background and environment. But let us hope as we proceed certain patterns will become clear.

Again one should emphasise that this is not a matter of traditional or of new differences between Protestant and Catholic. It would be truer to say there is more agreement between the new, that is the liberal or modern Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Baptist, say, than between the traditional and conservative Roman Catholic and his modern liberal counterpart. Let us therefore begin by choosing a few of the more striking aspects of disagreement and look at these first in the more negative forms in which the upholders of the new, the revolutionaries of the Spirit, appear to the traditionalists to express themselves.

First and foremost there is the protest against authority, authority in all the ways in which either, on the one hand, in institutional form it is visible for all to see or, on the other, in less visible aspects in which it is felt to be imposed or exerted. Indeed so large does this single issue of authority loom that it is thought by many to be the whole issue, the essence of the modern crisis. It will be insisted here however that we are dealing with much more than a crisis of authority. To the Roman Catholic it may appear that authority, the questioning of it, the rebellion against it, the suspicion of the thing in and for itself as distinct from those who hold and wield it at any time or in any single place is the heart of the issue. To those who inhabit the more northern countries of Europe or to Americans the matter will appear differently. I must omit the Greek Orthodox Church as I do not know enough about conditions within it; and such bodies, say, as the Baptists in Soviet Russia or the Christians of

China since, first, too little is known about them and, second, because they are not free. For the modern revolution, like that of the Reformation before it, is an assertion of freedom, the freedom of the individual Christian against the very institution, the mere "imposition, of authority; only this time, the new Catholic and Protestant are fighting together against their traditionally minded co-religionists. This in itself, however, is a new problem. Authority has always been the object of criticism, often of hatred. How then is the modern attitude to it a new one?

In the past for the most part it was not authority in itself that was disapproved of so much as the injustices of those who wielded it. It was particular people and particular issues that were disliked by one or other section of the faithful. The important difference today is that it is felt that authority in general, however wise or benevolent it be, is in some sense an affront to human freedom. Always, let us notice, there is a return to this central issue of freedom. It has always been felt in the West and North of Europe that a man's religion is primarily his personal concern and therefore that he must be free to choose it for himself and exercise it in the way, within obvious limits, that he chooses. Thus Protestants might now say that the Roman Church too is becoming Protestant in a sense; though the chances are that all Roman Catholics, modernist and liberal though they might be, would dissent from this explanation out of their strong view of the Church as a community, a Divine Society.

In fact the matter is best explained in terms of the evolution of human consciousness which in any one country and time has reached a different stage. Thus this new attitude within the Churches, were a bird's-eye view possible, would be seen to correspond in time and place with the spread of that extreme self-consciousness which is at once the privilege and bane of western and northern Europe and America. How far this new consciousness corresponds with the rise of industrialism in the West, mainly let us notice in the western and northern countries, would take us beyond our subject to examine. It is an interesting subject. But the point for us now is that what has been well called the Consciousness Soul of modern western man is rapidly moving eastward and southward.

The term Consciousness Soul may need a little defining. Consciousness is not a new thing; neither is self-consciousness. What is new, however, and what has been distinguishing for good and evil the intellectual and the spiritual attitude of western Europe in particular for the last 50 years—the poetry of the Christian English writer T. S. Eliot and the prose of the non-Christian Frenchman Sartre are alike examples of it—is the new sort of preoccupation with consciousness. It is a sort of consciousness of being conscious, of being two persons at once, the doer of a deed, the exponent of an attitude, say, and the observer, usually the critical sardonic and cynically self-consciousness observer of this doer, this exponent. Thus no doubt there are a thousand young writers, artists, critics and others here in Calcutta—one mentions these be-



cause they are usually associated with the avant-garde of consciousness in any period and country—who will be practising this new mode and exemplifying it in their work. But the contention here is that if this is so it is a fashion, a deliberate striking of an attitude, the manifestation of youth's insistence on being always rather more than up-to-date, not as yet a genuine birth or a felt experience. In this age of the consciousness soul the emphasis is always upon the individual, his preoccupation with himself, with what constitutes individuality. It is concerned with what it means to this strange bewildered creature, faced with the daunting spectacle of the technological age and the terrifying experiences of the harsh competition, violence and horror in which it expresses itself, to be modern 20th century man. Western man is asking himself what does to be human, to be a man at all today, mean; and in particular what it means to be responsible and free.

This has been a long digression, but its excuse is that unless we understand the psychology of this revolution of consciousness (for a revolution it is a complete turning of the wheel of the mind of modern man in the West, and one, of course, about which many other things than religion and faith revolve) we shall not understand the real nature of the fact itself. Could I add that I am trying to describe not evaluate, not indicating my sympathies at this stage of the argument; and insist that though I see the necessity of change, revolutionary change, I do not wish to be understood as saying that all the demands for change that one hears of, or all

such changes as have occurred are in themselves right and good. Here as always, you have caution and timidity on the one side and temerity and licence on the other. To come down flatly on one side against the other would be foolish, unless one understood, from the aspects which I have tried to describe, the real as opposed to the apparent situation.

Having emphasised this I can proceed to enumerate some of the things that the critics of the traditional faith and the institutions that uphold it oppose. At this point as one mentions disapproval of institutions one might suggest that there as in so much else, with what interesting consequences I hope to show in the sequel, there is some envy of an admiration for Hinduism, among the young in particular. For they see here a faith with a very long history which has not felt the need of organization, systematisation or ecclesiastical institutions in anything like the degree in which Christianity has which leads one again to add that much in this description of what appears strange and new to the Christian world of the West is bound to seem to Hindus rather obvious, even banal. So much so indeed that one fears they will wonder what all the fuss in the West is about. Nothing is happening there, after all, they might say, but what they know and we too should have known was bound to happen, considering the nature of Divine Truth itself and the ways in which man can attain to knowing it.

Yet if orthodox Hindus should think thus and feel that there is nothing more to be said—Europe

after all is young compared with India, and Christianity might appear by comparison a rather artificial, perhaps amateur, sort of faith—then it is probable they are wrong. This revolution among Christians is one that is going to extend far beyond the limits of Christianity and of the western world. For as has been maintained it is as much a revolution in consciousness, a revolution not only in the understanding of God as of man, of one man by another. In these respects, in that consciousness and humanity themselves are the real issues, nothing less than whole world, Christian and non-Christian alike, is concerned.

But it is not only because the young modernist sees in the system of the Establishment in whatever Church (though most in the Roman Catholic Church where establishment and a sort of feeling that somehow a thing is not real unless it can be given visible and tangible manifestation had reached its acme in the 19th century) an explicit or implicit affront to the freedom of the individual believer to believe and to act as he chooses. It is not a matter of the Ecclesia, the Church as a human and even a technical and professional institution like any other, that seems now to increasing numbers an implied infringement of freedom and an affront to the dignity of both God and man. It is the frustration born of experience, more than ever agonising at a time when so much history happens, we might say, so quickly, of the narrow, fearful, backward-looking and excessively cautious and conservative attitude of religious authority in general. On the one hand is the fact that the more ancient

the institution, the more widespread its concern and control, the greater its cares and responsibilities as it sees them, the more slowly and hesitantly will it admit change. On the other hand is the perception, as its critics are only too quick to point out, that the Church is more properly concerned with man's future than his past. Should it not be living in today and tomorrow they ask and not in a perennial yesterday? Why has it not more to say and to do about the Third World? Why will it not get its fact off the ground and give us a theology of lunar exploration, of space travel, of the new imperialism of outer space, and of soil, water and air pollution?

An outsider, a sympathetic outsider, feels that its failure to pronounce is partly because of its own genuine uncertainties. So many and difficult after all are the problems of authority and their implications today, wherever it is vested, but in particular of religious authority where men are touched in the regions of their greatest sensitiveness. For notice what happens when, say, the present Pope makes a pronouncement on Birth Control. He makes it with the greatest care and goodwill, out of the deepest experience of the faith of the Church and the moral and other issues involved. He writes from Italy and immediately six hundred priests in America, all of them devout members of his Church, lodge their urgent and heartfelt protest. For they are equally sure that in much of what he says and advises he is mistaken or illadvised. So too, though in a rather different way, when for the guidance of Christians he writes a statement of his

own and of what he believes should be an intelligent Christian's faith amid the complicated problems of the present. What happens then? Great differences of opinion among Catholics, and by no means Catholics alone, are roused. The point is, it was not so much disagreement with any particular thing that he said that roused opposition. It was resentment that one person, however respected and in however high place, should appear to be telling other persons, however much humbler their pretensions might be, what they ought to think.

This then is a large part of the issue, if from a negative point of view. Decision is felt to be a man's private concern. Interference, with whatever wisdom or goodwill, is construed as interference with a man's own personal duty to choose, his own proper and real responsibility, that in short by virtue of which he is a man, has his own individual identity, is an ego, a self. If he cannot properly be a man it is felt, however incoherently and inarticulately, he certainly cannot be a Christian. After all many modern liberal Christians would claim this to be something self-evident, using the strictest etymological evidence as their ground. To be a man is to be a creature with a mind, one who can think for himself, exercise responsible decision. For thought is not thought if it is not free. Do not misunderstand me, please. For there is a great problem here. There will be millions, perhaps a majority of all Christians, who will welcome the Pope's statements. After all, they can give very good reasons. The times and the issues are difficult and what can be more reasonable than that the expert



should inform the less expert and that these should be guided by him? How else after all shall we achieve and maintain the vital unity of the Church? How else shall we avoid the dangers that will follow upon divisions within it? So speak caution, worldly wisdom, human care, natural prudence: and so speak, if they can bring themselves or be brought to intelligent thought, the masses of the uneducated, the illiterate, the poor, the average, the uninterested. If all looks so logical, and indeed it is in terms of intellectual and abstract mode of thoughts, supremely logical.

What then is wrong with the argument? How can intelligent and sensitive Christians of goodwill find fault with it? They will say that this attitude is not one of faith in the Christian God but of lack of faith in Him, that it is one of distrust and fear masquerading as wisdom and love. Theologically they would say the attitude of authority is almost always that of dead logic when it should be that of the living LOGOS, the word, the meaning and wisdom of God made flesh in human forms in Christ, at once fully God and fully man. Establishment's attitude almost always, in the past and the present alike has been distrustful of that invisible form of his living and present being that Christ promised would be with those who, distrusting the wisdom of the world, trusted in Him alone. That is, it is one of distrust of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in Unity, the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, as the creed proclaims him to be, the Helper and Strengtheners, the Inspirer with wisdom, the sole Guide to truth

## DEAD LOGIC AND LIVING WORD

Mention of "dead logic" brings me to my next point, one not nearly so much stressed as yet as the issue of authority. Perhaps this is so because it is in an important sense related to it, part of it indeed. Yet as in this intellectual war between Christians of different degrees of faith or of outlook and temperament irrespective of differences of Church affiliation or denominational association, it is becoming an issue in itself and therefore will there be so treated. And what an issue it is: dead logic and living word!

No doubt when the definitive history of Christian thought in the 20th century comes to be written in the 21st century (should there be, some in the West might feel it proper to add, a 21st century at all or one in which Christian thought continues) it will have something to say, which while seeming obvious to everyone then is not at all obvious to us now. Surely however, it requires no vast degree of prescience to suggest that among other such findings there will be two of note. Of these, the first is that we so-called Christians of today are confusing the intellect with the spirit, with the result that without knowing it almost all Christians are idolatrous and materialist. Indeed we are more deeply idolatrous and more insidiously materialistic by reason of the utter unconsciousness, deafness and blindness with which we are afflicted. But so after all were our forbears, the good Pharisees, the scholarly Sadducees, the clever lawyers who crucified Christ.

My second prophesied finding by the future historian, here projected into the present is the surmise that what is now called the scientific attitude is going to be found inadequate, unscientific in fact. That vast idol (for it cannot in its present form be called God) that goes under the name of science will be dethroned and in his place the true monarch, that royal being of whom so much of what we call science is a poor shadow, restored to his proper dignity.

May I once more beg not to be understood to be antiscientific? Consider for one moment how this great and glorious reign of modern science (I do not speak mockingly) began in the early 17th century with the insistence that barren scholasticism had had its day and had barred man's progress long enough. Let him now submit the universe and all its contents to the careful, unbiassed and detached examination of his senses. And now consider where this patient investigation by number, measure and weight through the sole agency of the purely passive and unbiassed senses and the recording and arranging brain have brought us. How little have our senses now to do with our present knowledge of Nature! The most sophisticated modern forms of weighing and measuring, of the microscope and the telescope, take very little account of and pay little regard to the human eye. Moreover, when on this evidence of the passive senses, the mechanical camera of the brain has taken its photographs and made its recordings, along comes the computer further to by-pass the real human intelligence and arranges and draws the necessary deductions from

the information fed to it. In theory, of course; the most sophisticated computer will always be the servant of man; in fact the reverse looks like being the case.

To shorten what would certainly be too long a digression let it be said that we are being moved by evolution itself towards a new view of science. Would that we could become conscious of what is happening and so cooperate with evolution and understand and control our own destiny. But what is this new view and how in any case does it affect our attitude to religion? To put it briefly, it is that the truly scientific view of a thing, as opposed to the modern scientific view of it, is obtained when the whole of that thing, in its organic and living form and in its natural context and environment, is submitted to the full mind of man. That is to say, the truth about a thing will not be found by detached analysis of the inanimate object abstracted from its true habitat by the passive senses supported by the recording and mirroring brain. It will be found when the object, whatever it is, in its normal and healthy form is confronted by the triple faculties of the unifying mind, by the intellectual, feeling and willing elements, all of them essential to the human personality and all of them therefore essential to the mind, to the thinking of man. It should not be difficult for an audience in India to sympathise with this view. After all, implicitly at all events, is it not the very heart of the Upanisads? Let the Sanskrit sounds, the words *Manu*, *manas*, followed by the Latin *mens* (meaning mind) and then by their Anglicised derivations, mind, mental,

man, men, roll on your tongues and it will not be long before a surmise, perhaps a new truth, will rise up before your inner eyes.

But how, it will be asked, is this related to the modern revolution in Christianity? What does it tell us about that? To which the answer is, a very great deal indeed. Anyone who has studied the phenomenon of youth in Europe and America, the flower people and the "hippies" in particular: or who has read, say, Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*, cannot have failed to come to certain conclusions. He will have noticed among a great deal that in merely subjective, negative, destructive, some genuinely creative gropings and affirmations. Youth has reasons enough for its quarrels with its elders, with authority in general, in view of the kind of world which it has received at its hands. But it is not about that or what appears to the young as the wholly life-denying quality of all the forms in which the modern structures of society in Politics, Industry, Economics, Law, the Sciences and the rest are organised that we can enter further here. It is rather their insistence upon first-hand experience of things, of life itself, rather than second-hand knowledge about them. For they have a strong intuition, still imperfectly formulated, that the artistic or the imaginative intellect gives deeper insight into truth than the merely cerebral intellectual, the abstract, the static, in whatever guise they appear in their experience, and in particular of all that appears to them as imposed upon them from above without their consultation, the merely traditional, the merely conventional, all



frozen or fossilised truth; all that is merely dogmatic. If you agree with this diagnosis of much of the younger generation in the West, you cannot fail to see how closely related this new temper and mood is to the religious crisis. To the boldest and most imaginative of the young as to many who are no longer so young, it is conventional, traditional and dogmatic Christianity that is idolatrous, meaningless and irrelevant. Having received, if not a scientific education, at least having inherited the jargon, catchwords and paraphernalia of science they find much in the myths, legends, and miracles of the Bible frankly incredible. The entire concept of revelation is unacceptable to them. It is not, however, that they are incapable of faith. But they are saying to their religious teachers who cannot help them: we are not interested in all you know about religion, the Church, the Christian faith; we want to know them now, know about them. Stop talking, stop reading, cease your clever intellectual explanations. Thus they are saying in effect to their elders: show us that you really know God: Prove it by your lives and we will be convinced. No other sort of religious education can help us, will do anything but drive us away from religion.

There is, that is to say, a great weariness of things at second-hand, of books and lectures by merely academic experts; and in religious matters this of course means sermons and moral exhortations whether from parent, priest, school or college teacher or university professor. It is a tiredness of words in which the live breath of the primal word of God is no longer felt to be flowing, of an excess

of intellectualising, a feeling of a dearth of genuine inspiration, of a deficiency if not a death of the Spirit. And in this connexion one may state with assurance that ultimately the main obstacle to the acceptance of Christianity in its conventional forms amongst youth in the West today is the felt disparity between what their elders say and what they do. Or rather perhaps it is the difference between what parents proclaim, with however great sincerity to be the truths of Christianity and what the quality of their lives more deeply confesses. It is a pathetic spectacle often though it is not entirely one of youth accusing age of hypocrisy. For youth, particularly American youth, is in one sense at least empirical and honest, even pitilessly so. It has heard, as we have all heard a thousand times, that Christianity is the religion of love. But looking round at its teachers and preachers it sees no greater evidence of love in their lives than amongst ordinary men and women in the world outside who have no religious pretensions and make no religious proclamations. For consider, it looks at its parents hopefully, with all the idealism of youth and will to worship. And how do its parents seem to it to respond? Too often there is no doubt, they appear to fail the young if not to betray them, through being at once Christian and unhappy. The young see their elders go to Church, read their Bibles, say their prayers, listen to sermons.

But is this all that they see? Unfortunately not; they see these same elders quarrelling, becoming separated, getting divorced. Or they see how, as it were, to the exclusion of or making nonsense of

the truths of Christianity the pressures of business, politics or professional avocation get in the way, occupy too much of the lives that youth feels should be given to living and not merely to surviving, existing, or, as we say, just making a living. All this and much more the more intelligent and more imaginative of them see both in Europe and America today and no doubt further afield also. And is their verdict surprising in the circumstances? They opt out of the rat race, as many of them say. For it is the Spirit who is forcing them to seek, a new way to a new world. Many abandon religion altogether, feeling with Lucretius, that it is the cause of more harm and unhappiness than of peace and joy in life. Those however who contrive to retain a religious link with their past are almost all of them firm on this point. They want Christ not Christianity; they want knowledge, personal, direct, first-hand knowledge, living experience of God; not faith any longer, not belief simply. It is these young and revolutionary Christians, if we agree to call them Christians, who notice a further fact about traditional religious practise that is anathema to them. Quick to notice hypocrisy, even where they least wish to find it and where it is least intended, they make no secret of what appears to them to be the greater hypocrisy of much conventional Christian practice. They ask: Why all this narrowness and pettiness? Why this preoccupation with sin and guilt? Why this excessive concern with personal sanctity, with the search for holiness, with obtaining salvation? Does not Christianity insist upon the forgetting, upon losing of

the self, the ego? Why then are so many Christians concerned with nothing else? Why this everlasting and morbid egotism that in so many forms tries, yet fails, to conceal itself?

It is the same or a closely related mood, that abhorring the sheer life-denial, the narrowness, inhibitedness and timidity of so much conventional religion in the West, looks to the East for what it can find there to supply its needs. You will all know of the adventures and aberrations of the Beatles, say, with Maharshi Mahesh Yogi. And here in the streets of Calcutta, as much more so in those of Kathmandu, you may have felt disgusted with the spectacle of European or American youth going oriental. But please believe that beneath some of those offensive and undignified, and often immoral and unnatural, exhibitions, a real search is in progress, a real hunger is looking for its satisfaction. Not less so moreover for that often it may not know itself to be seeking or to be hungry, that it may not be able to say what it wants. But though this is another story, the general modern revolution of youth, from this aspect at least, is very closely concerned with the modern revolution in Christianity. Not finding at home what it is looking for, it looks abroad, though only a small fraction of it actually travels abroad. And, unless my judgment is seriously in error, it is looking for a religion where all men can meet: for the one religion various in its manifestation suited to a single world civilisation equally various in its manifestations. Western youth is specially interested in Hinduism and Buddhism (in Zen Buddhism in particular) because here it finds

religions older than Christianity that are still alive in the popular mind to a degree in which no one could pretend Christianity is alive amongst the urban populations of Europe and America today. Finding difficulty with the entire conceptuality of a Christianity of myth, vision and miracle; of Christ's Resurrection from death and Ascension to Heaven; of a three-tiered universe with a very spatial heaven, earth and hell; burdened also, as it appears to it, with categories of prophecy and revelation which it is not able to understand, it is with considerable relief that it finds that there are living religions, still practised by hundreds of millions which are unencumbered with any of these embarrassments.

The vision of Christ that thou dost see  
Is my vision's greatest enemy.

William Blake wrote these lines more than 150 years ago; and he more than any other writer is the herald and the poet of the modern revolution of the Christian faith. It is not a simple matter then of the older generation believing and the younger disbelieving. It is rather one in which, confronted by the same tenet of the faith one sees as black what the other sees to be white. The truth is, we are watching a new development in the evolution of man's spiritual consciousness taking place beneath our eyes in the brief interval of a single generation; so rapidly, as has been said, does the history of man now unfold itself before our gaze.

Thus it is not of much use to ask which of the two is right, the younger or the older; they are both



right in their own place and time and situation and from their different points of view. Our instinctive sympathies may be with one or the other; but we would be wrong if we condemned either out of hand. After all we have here a manifest change in the very categories of thought itself; one it may well be with which the East is familiar but one nevertheless which the western world has found it difficult to accept hitherto and is now finding itself forced to consider very seriously. One could describe the change by saying that we are having to move from "either—or" to "both—and." Or more accurately perhaps from "either—or" to "neither—nor," but to a third truth only to be found between the two opposites.

Blake again among English poets and especially the Blake of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and Coleridge among our philosophers, perceived this rather un-English and certainly very non-bourgeois truth. From other points of view it is the foundation of Hegel's thought and so of the Dialectical Materialism of Karl Marx who in his turn built his great edifice of thought upon it. But it is unnecessary, stupid indeed to labour the point to an audience such as this. We must no longer think or talk in terms of "true" or "false," "good" or "bad" simply. Rather we must think in a new category of polarity; of two opposites which are held in the dynamic tension by the third that depends on and emerges from both. One might add, though with no time to explain or elaborate, that connected with this there could be said to be two other categories, the one of transformation, the other of metamor-

phosis. That is to say, the mysterious third, which needs and partakes of, yet is neither of the other two, is a live metamorphosis, at once the offspring of them both and something higher than either, their transformed essence.

### EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW CHRISTIANITY

Applying this truth, if truth it is, to the New Christians one may perhaps reach an understanding both of the predicament from which they suffer and the new vision to which, not always knowing what it is, they are aspiring. They may seem to us to be wilful and reckless in their insistence upon experiment, upon (from their point of view) the dangerously pragmatic method of trial and experiment to see what works. For the spectacle of the world and of human society as they see it clearly demonstrates to them that what their parents and teachers have taught or rather have shown them does not work, is not to be trusted. They have to learn by the hard way, find out a truth that works. They are presumably the first generation in history to have had to do just this; and the best of them merit a great deal more sympathy than most of us in the West are willing to concede to them. God helps them who help themselves is the teaching both of Christianity and of Dr. Smiles. May it not be, shall we not hope it will prove to be, the old God in a new form who will reveal himself to them? And are there not some signs perhaps that He is already doing so?

One thing is certain. If this revolt of youth is maintained and spreads, then many seemingly

sacrosanct institutions are going to fall. So much so, it may be that the majority will feel that anarchy has been let loose and that the end of the world has come. May be it will indeed, and if so the western world will deserve its fate. Yet this need not be. The danger, as at least one sympathetic observer sees it, is on the one hand that youth will lose both its confidence, its honesty and its enthusiasm as it grows older; and on the other, that it will not find among us older ones the teachers with experience and imagination who, sharing its vision, will also understand the true nature and origin of that vision. For such teachers alone will be able to persuade it to accept the long and steady course in self-discipline, the stiff training in moral practice and meditation by which what one might otherwise prove to be but a passing meteor in the night may become a veritable and permanent illumination, a constant star.

Reference was made earlier to such phrases as "the death" and "the absence" of God, to "religionless religion" and to modern western man's living in a "post-Christian age." It is time these phrases were made intelligible and related to what has followed. In some degree it must by now have become clear, however, in what sense they have become the common terminological exchange of modern writers, Christian and non-Christian both. They have indeed been endlessly defined and explained and yet it seems their deeper meaning has still been understood by very few. For though it may be accurate in describing modern experience in Europe and America to say that in a way unique

in human history people now appear for the first time to be without any sense or apprehension of God, that all felt evidence of his Being and Presence have deserted them, so that they feel compelled to talk of his "absence" and even of his "death," one cannot satisfactorily leave the matter there. Note that God is not being said not to exist or never to have existed. He is being felt—that is by many young people whose parents' experience was very different no longer to be there, to be real. Indeed you may find older people who will tell you that up to a certain age they enjoyed the feeling of Divine Comfort, felt sure of God's invisible presence with them, his answering of their prayers and so on and then describe how either suddenly or gradually they lost this assurance and felt deserted. No one will deny the pain and bewilderment of this experience.

It is probably not to be explained wholly in conventional terms as that experience of the dark night of the soul that everyone who seriously practises his religion will know at least in some degree. It is a part, a main part, of the mood of our times and perhaps it is not wholly accurate to say that it is still restricted wholly to Europe and America. It is after all the foundation of that philosophy of Existentialism which is now the mood of the greater part of the so-called intelligentsia of the West. And of course it explains to some extent the loss of nerve, the despair, the pessimism and the cynicism that are rife today; so much so indeed that even those who deplore it cannot but share it. It is the

very air that you breathe whether you are in London or Paris or New York.

One needs to write like this of it, in order that when one says it nevertheless need not have happened like this and ought not to have happened; and goes on to maintain that if only the West had understood the true nature of history or the real meaning of the evolution of man's spiritual consciousness as it unfolds in time, he will not be too quickly accused of making glib and facile statements of being a pseudo romantic in religion, a false optimist in life. The fact is, however, that religion or, should we rather say, human consciousness of the divine, has a history like everything else. It is not a fixed, given quantity, a static absolute and unalterable essence. The history of man's spiritual consciousness the world over, as anyone who has read the myths and legends as well as the accepted scriptures of the different religions will know, is from a full perception of the Divine in the universe, nature, society and the self with a completely unawakened consciousness, to a loss of this perception as consciousness slowly awakens more and more in order that man might come to himself as a conscious, free and independent being. It is the last phrase that in the context of our subject needs reiteration. Would indeed that it could be repeated and its truth realised by every European and American today: for how much suffering could thereby be avoided. The old God has to go, he has to absent himself, he has to "die" in order that man may become modern man, true man.



Let my meaning not be misapprehended for all manner of error and confusion is possible here. There is no denial here of the supreme being or reality of the Godhead. The point rather is that after being experienced in one way God has to be experienced in another. In essence the issue is as clear as that. For this really is what the modern revolution in Christianity is about; as also if there are modern revolutions in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam this is ultimately, however much the surface manifestations may argue otherwise, what they are about. That having been said, however, it is necessary to stress that by the word "modern" is intended not so much that which is happening now in time as that which exhibits itself in terms of that kind of extreme self-consciousness, that consciousness of being conscious which is the mark of modern man in the West.

God, we are told, has gone, has absented himself. But where has He gone and in what sense does He absent himself? If He has died, what sort of death is this? And is there no possibility of re-birth, no hope of resurrection?

The answer again is clear. Or should we say it is clear to everyone except the modern European or American whose very spiritual suffering disables him from detaching himself from it so as to become aware of its meaning? In more or less degree and with different qualities of clarity and emphasis the great religions of the world once more all say the same thing. If the answer is given here in terms of Christianity it is partly because that is our subject, and partly, if one may be excused for saying

so, because Christianity sees and states the issue with unique and complete clarity. Indeed a Christian might almost be forgiven, for holding that it was with the single purpose of making the statement of this truth with supreme emphasis not only in words but words' demonstration in historical fact and person that Christianity came into existence at all.

The Bible as you know is a large collection of religious writing of different sorts divided into two sections, the Old and the New Covenants though the less correct word "Testament" is more usually employed. The Old Covenant is the scripture of Judaism; the Old and New both, though the New in particular because it is or contains as its main element the story of Jesus Christ, are the scriptures of Christianity. If as is rarely done these days an intelligent and unbiassed reader were to read the entire book from beginning to end, as it should be read, he would be likely to make some very interesting observations. He would among other things note the easy and familiar intimacy in childlike innocence, of man's closeness of association with God and Nature in the first pages; then the loss of this and the gradual rise of human consciousness usually through adversity, the effects of violence and the pressure of need, in the pages that follow. Even the briefest summary however, would take too much space here and it is possible only to allude to the establishment of the moral code to govern and control man's relationship with each other and the Deity now that, with the loss of perception of the Divine, the enjoyed relationship of mutual love has

disappeared. But a vital change is occurring. The voice that was once heard without in desert and field, on hill-side and by river-banks now begins to be heard within, in the heart of man. It has not always been noticed that the emphasis is as much on seeing as hearing: for we read often of "the word of the Lord" that the prophet "sees." This is something distinct from conscience and yet an inner experience: clairvoyance and clairauidience both. Then somewhere about 600 B.C. one of the great Hebrew prophets, Jeremiah, calls the people of Jerusalem to attend to new facts. The time is soon coming, he says, when it will be no longer a case of the nations having a spiritual elite of the few who from their privileged knowledge will teach others. The day of the Proletariat, the Sudra, of the Common Man is about to dawn. "They shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." And how does this come about? Because the Lord will put his law "in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." But the Sudra, the Common Man, let us notice now, is, in the pejorative sense of the word to be Common no longer. In terms of the Bible he is to be at once a king and a priest; likewise in the Gita he is to be a *rajarsi*.

And what is the great metamorphosis when 600 years later Christ appears? His audiences see that He speaks with an authority that no man and no institution has hitherto been known to claim. But what does He say? "Behold, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Note: the reference is not the knowledge of the inner law possessed by the

conscience for we all have that; but the power to carry out the bidding of that inner law which certainly we did not have before. It is necessary to stress the import of this *peripateia*, as it were, this *volte-face*, in the history of the Spirit of man. It is an organic metamorphosis of such dimensions that it is usually only the young in any age who can perceive its implications. The kingdom of Heaven is the Divine sovereignty, the power of the God himself. And this power, and nothing other or less than this power, is with the coming of the human and divine being of Christ on to the stage of history at a known date and in a known place, both of them well attested by extra-biblical records, has become man's power if he will open his eyes and ears, stretch out his hands and receive the gift. For, of course, this was in view from the first, from before the very beginning of things. And Christ goes on to inform and indeed to see in this light his 12 disciples who in their microcosmic grouping are representative of the totality, it would appear not only of the human race but of the 12 constellations of the Zodiac, the entire universe itself. He identified them with himself. Weak, fallible, faithless men as they were when He spoke to them, inherently and essentially they are divine royal, all-powerful, all-wise. In one of the great seven self-proclamations of St. John's Gospel He says "I am the light of the world;" but He then goes on to say to them, "You are the light of the world." He calls their attention to his own deeds, deeds in creation and re-creation that are the operation not of a man but of God, and then says to these 12 ordinary men

"Greater deeds than these shall you do." And how shall this happen? "Because I go to the Father." Because when the Father and the Son are re-united, when the first and second Person of the eternal Trinity become, as in essence they have always been, One again the Third Person, themselves still but Themselves in the equally divine but now universal person of the Spirit, will be released, as it were: will operate with power in the hearts and minds and wills of men.

But of course his operation is not confined to the Jews, nor to the Christians but is extended to the entire world, and indeed to the Cosmos itself. The Divine Promises and Deeds are as precise as they are immense. This God loves the whole world, we read, He gives his life for the whole world. It has fallen into such ignorance, folly, error and blindness that it is now alienated both from its true self and from its true God. But He will restore it and reconcile it to himself. And this so marvellously that the former glory of men in his unconscious and childlike innocence will be as nothing compared with the future glory of his conscious adult destiny. For fully conscious at least of his individual being as man and in full exercise and enjoyment of the spiritual hierarchies, the archetypal ideas, his own truly Divine organism dynamic and operative within him, man will become consciously what in fact, though unconsciously, he had always been, a son of God. He will be the son of whom it may be said, moreover, as the one unique and representative Son said of himself that He is "one with the Father" and who "is in," in the biblical



phrase, the Father and the Son as they also are "in" him.

Anyone who is puzzled or put off by this discussion upon the Bible and these quotations from it must bear to be reminded that it was after all necessary if we are to understand scientifically the modern godless existentialists' situation, understand it, that is, more deeply than he does himself. But it was necessary also if we are to understand the new and revolutionary Christian's situation. After all it explains both. Jesus has hardly ascended into heaven, the Son has hardly returned as He said He would to the Father, than Paul arrives on the scene. And what does Paul say? He says that henceforth we must understand Christ in terms of his omnipresent though invisible being and presence in the form of the Spirit. "Not I live but Christ lives in me," Paul says and "The life that I live (and we may add, the deeds that I do) I do by the power of the Spirit." You cannot fail to note the drift, the turning of the tide of human consciousness. For millenia there has been an ebb: Now the flow is beginning. In Paul we have a man the whole tenor, capacity, quality and achievement of whose life proves that man can do what Christ said that his followers would be able to do, deeds greater in a sense than his own. For after all Christ in his lifetime upon earth failed to convert even the very small Roman province of Palestine; but Paul could be said in a sense to have converted the whole Roman Empire.

How did he do this? It is hardly necessary now to ask, for the facts should make the answer clear.

One could perhaps put the whole matter in another form (and this might be interesting to Hindus who will be able to see the spiritual history of India in a comparable light) by suggesting that man's spiritual evolution unfolds in three epochs. There is first the Epoch of the Father, that is of Jahweh, Jupiter or Brahma perhaps or Zeus Akarene of the Zoroastrians in which man is still a child in that he has not yet achieved self-consciousness. This is followed by the shorter epoch of the Son, of Christ in Christianity and Krsna, say, in Hinduism. Both the Age itself and the inspired scriptures that interpret it now show the Divine self descending from Heaven to Earth. Man is now taking this Divine self into his own impoverished and perverted egotism and so becoming transformed, himself now in the fullest and most real sense a son of this Father. And this in turn is followed by the third epoch, that in which we now live, in which all Christians could and should be living in the wisdom and strength of that Spirit who is in a sense, as we have put it, the invisible form of the formerly visible Father and Son and whom the Son said He and the Father would send to his followers on his return to his eternal union with the Father at his Ascension. Men themselves, now sons of God and real members of the Divine Family, enlivened by the Spirit were now, having themselves been transformed, to transform their environment, earth itself. In the organic forms of transformation and metamorphosis the whole world was to be revolutionised; life and revolution were to be synonymous. For in the last 300 years in particular, we

must remember, the earth has been the sphere of the operations of Science or should we say in view of qualifications urged earlier, that which mankind has been persuaded to call Science. And Science, as we all know, works by analysis. It insists on rendering inanimate (I cannot quite bring myself to use Wordsworth's phrase "murder to dissect"), taking to pieces in order to examine, make deductions and build the innumerable machines and the vast structures that we see everywhere about us. It might be worth consideration whether through the centuries the Being the Inspiration of Science, that began as a good fairy has now become an all-powerful and terrible magician. Has not the whole earth in some sense become poisoned? Has it not, in the West in particular, been deprived gradually in turn of sound (all but ugly sound that is), of smell (of all but evil smell), of beauty, of spirit? Is it merely sentimental fantasy then to maintain that it lies, in feary terms or Spiritual terms, under a curse: that a spell, an evil enchantment, has been cast upon it? Have we not brought it upon ourselves?

#### WORKS OF THE SPIRIT

But what, we should all now be saying, has gone wrong? Where are the signs and the evidence of the power of the Spirit among Christians? Where are the sort of works that Christ said that his followers under the spirit's inspiration would be able to do? Where do we look for the wisdom, the peace, the truth, freedom and love that were to be the gifts of the Spirit to Christians? Let us answer

straight and frankly that they are not there: that in every century Christians have failed as they still fail lamentably to live in that Power and under the Inspiration. But to admit the failure is not to deny the fact, the potential fact. But as there is now particular use and may be harm in vague and general self-dispraise, it may be helpful rather to try to suggest one or two ways in which mistakes have been made and wrong courses taken if thereby we might correct them and avoid such mistakes ourselves in future. As there may be Roman Catholics in the audience let me in courtesy with all the ease of hindsight and all the complacency of personal self-exculpation I attribute errors, acknowledge that any criticism I may feel is wholly swallowed up in gratitude for the fact of the Church herself. After all I could not be an Anglican and other men could not be Lutherans or Methodists or Baptists but for that mother Church whose children we all are, even though, as children do, we may feel we must leave our home and our parents in order, with all the risks attendant upon it, to grow up.

My case then is that the most serious single failure of the Church in all its branches and denominations, is its failure to obey God the Spirit, and through the increasing blindness and deafness consequent upon this continued disobedience, its failure even to understand who and what that Spirit is. Nothing is easier than to be wise and uncharitable after the event. Remembering this, let me suggest that the Roman Church, in the three or four centuries following its formal establishment

early in the 4th century by the Emperor Constantine, set our liner the Ship of the Faith on a course so disastrous that it has never yet been fully able to correct it.

Four particular points are made here because to the best of my knowledge they are not usually emphasised in histories of the Faith or of the Church. In the first two or three centuries of the Christian era Christians were encouraged and helped by being shown Christ as the new or archetype Adonis, Oseris, Mithras, Dionysus, Appollo, Heracles and Orpheus. That is, the link with the so-called pagan world was not broken. Rather the opposite; it was the more deeply strengthened, for Christ gave meaning to the Asiatic world of the past in which He was born. In blindness to the Spirit this living connexion was severed. The Christian was then presented with the spectacle of an evil pagan heathen world condemned eternally on the one hand, and a true and saved Christian Church destined to eternal bliss on the other. Augustine himself had a deeper and wiser insight into these matters; but his interpretation of history did not in this matter become the official teaching of the Church. Thus almost always has Christianity failed to understand the non-Christian religions; and in particular how they are not only within the provenance but also within the care and inspiration of the Spirit. Always, or almost always, has Christianity, again deaf and blind to the Spirit, failed to see that Spirit's Divine operation working within history. Thus in general it has consistently failed to find any divine meaning in history or any pattern



or purpose in nature. Then again, in its ambition to ape and its greed to possess the power of that secular empire whose successor it claimed to be, and in order to maintain that worldly power it consistently for centuries tyrannised over Christian souls. They were sons of God, be it remembered, and heirs of eternal life, endowed each and every one of them with the sovereign power of the Spirit; but they were made to cringe before this throne, compelled to become its fearful subjects, ever anxiously in search of a doubtful salvation which they could never hope to enjoy without its permission and its blessing. And lastly as if to give final confirmation of its rejection of the Divine Spirit, its one serious rival in its desire for power over man, in the eighth Ecumenical Council of the Church in 869 A.D. it recorded its definition of the human being as a creature of body and soul only. Hitherto man had been seen as the image of his tri-une Maker to be a threefold being of body, soul and spirit. Now He was a twofold being only. The Spirit had in a sense been abolished by the Church.

Christians often talk as if the days of Pharisees, the Sadducees, Scribes and lawyers, the opponents, accusers and to the best of their ability the murderers of Christ, are over. But they are not; they are present still. These men were the best intellects of their day but they were not the purest or the most loving spirits. The Jerusalem Establishment 2,000 years ago identified intellect with Spirit and it is safe to say that in Rome, Moscow, London or Los Angeles the modern Establishments do the same. Thus the Spirit, the true God of our epoch, still

goes by default: He is verbally acknowledged but not really understood.

It is here that in so far as it is a genuinely Christian and creative revolution that the modern revolution in Christianity is an auspicious phenomenon. Let me hope that you have been by now convinced that we have amongst the young people of the West and also amongst those not so young (the Spirit, we remember takes no account of time by years) signs of a real transvaluation of traditional categories, evidence of real dethronement of idols too long worshipped. There are real signs that when it seems too late and all seems lost the Lord, the Spirit, the God of Life is extending his empire amongst men and women again and is renewing the life of the West.

Whatever the Churches may be, the Christian God himself is not a tyrant, however, no capricious or arbitrary ruler. He is the God of reason and freedom. Everything now depends on the exercise of his power in and by men and the extension of his dominion among men. He will not, because He cannot, force his will upon us. We are in the midst of events, the spiritual war goes on, for not all spirits are good. There are many enemies and there is no guarantee whatsoever that any battle except the last will be won. This war, moreover, or to revert to my title, this revolution, though it is called and indeed is a Christian revolution extends far beyond the bounds of Christendom if for no other reason than that the One Spirit of the universe pays little respect to the national, racial or religious boundaries of mankind. Standing here

then and addressing you I am not conscious of myself as a Christian speaking to others who are for the most part Hindus. I am conscious rather of our common human being, of being a man (if I may borrow Wordsworth's definition of the poet) speaking to men.

The western world today is in a wholly material way wealthy, powerful, educated and clever; but it is not wise. It possesses, or rather is possessed by, the energies of the evil spirit, but it knows very little of the energies of the good. Both the Christian revolution (should I not add the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim revolutions also) and my story are in a sense really matters of fuel and of a warmth; of lack of hope, sense of purpose and direction and therefore of lack of spiritual energy and power. Thus it is a question not only of rousing what we might call rational enthusiasm—that is not difficult for the younger generation in any period—but of maintaining it when youth is gone. Christians read in the Bible that in the times that precede the end of the Age there will be a war of all against all and the love of all but a very few will grow cold. Surely, however, this is not the experience and concern of Christians solely but of men and women of every religion and nationality. For this is one world, and, however it may suit many to raise divisions within it, it is going to become one, if you will pardon my Irish expression, more and more. There are many religions; but there is only one Spirit.

And surely what we are seeing the world over, intermittent sparks and blazes apart, is the gradual

failure of the steady warmth of the Spirit, the invisible God in the heart of every man. As if by a spell, the black enchantment of a most powerful magician, a terrible cold is slowly but relentlessly freezing the hearts and wills and minds of men. Can the secret of our lost warmth be rediscovered? Can the Spirit, the Lord of all good life, by whom many Christians seem to have been deserted (though of course the truth is that it is we who have abandoned him not He us), be rediscovered, be found again and become our true and constant possession, our very human nature in its true form? The answer is yes, it can, by the disciplined practice of the precise methods of a new and true science of the Spirit, albeit that true science be the old in a new form, seeing there is nothing new, absolutely new, under the sun. For after all is it not clear that the real revolution, as opposed to the many apparent and false forms of it, that true Christians long for is the same revolution that Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, all people of intelligence and goodwill everywhere in fact desire? The question then is this. Is there a modern science that at once strengthens the will, convinces the intellect, and assures the deepest feelings of modern man's heart the world over? If there really were a science of the Spirit that could do this there would be few who would not wish to be its students. But is there?

It is the firm conviction of the writer of this paper that born of the marriage of East and West, but in particular of India and Europe, there is such a science. It is a science that takes up the inspired

insights and intuitions, the statements and aphorisms, say, of Swami Vivekananda on education and other subjects and organises them into a complete precise and organic spiritual whole. It speaks the language and uses the thought-forms that men and women in this latter part of the century understand and use; and, it may be prophesied, that the wise among the people of the 21st century will also speak and use.



# Niskama Karma and the Bhakti-Yoga

Prof. M. Ghosh

It is a universally admitted fact that the Gita holds an important place in the life of millions of Indians as well as quite a number of foreigners who regard the Bible as their scripture. This should help us to maintain optimism in spite of the chaotic social conditions of our times. Though there are actual differences between them on some minor points, such as their method of worshipping God, both these groups of people have a valuable agreement regarding the existence of God and their acceptance of an ideal relationship with him through love and devotion, and they consider this to be the *Summum bonum* of their life. This may be said to give ample justification to a convention like the present one in which some like-minded persons from both persuasions, have assembled to understand themselves in the light of the Gita and the Bible. The most urgent need of the present times is to make people realise the importance of religion in their daily life. Due to historic reasons the attention of the average people has turned, now-a-days mostly if not wholly, to the material basis of existence. They forget that man does not live by bread alone, and completely ignore the spiritual side of their life. This gives rise to in-

numerable problems which remaining unsolved lengthen the chain of their misery. Though some sociologists of the time fondly believe that through a ministration to its material needs alone the society can be rebuilt, this proves to be extremely unrealistic. For in some modern states where emphasis has been put on economic prosperity of the people and even that led to some praiseworthy results, the members of the society are far from enjoying true peace and happiness, and this creates a great number of problems for the society as a whole. To close students of history it is clear that an absence of the proper practice of religion is the cause of human misery. For when man has difficulties regarding the material life, and when he is in the midst of them his attention inevitably turns inward. From an experience of the past, it is clear that religion only can satisfy the hankerings of one's inner nature. But seeing things in this way may, however, prove to be an over-simplification. For it is highly doubtful if man's struggle in life will ever disappear completely from the face of the earth. The society and for that matter the world, is constantly undergoing a change. When one struggle disappears there appears immediately another kind of it which may even be worse. This is the reason why men are very often apt to look back to the past with some kind of nostalgia. Hence the economic salvation to which some of the sociologists of our times pay exclusive attention, loses its absolute value. It has to be admitted that unless material prosperity goes hand-in-hand with the spiritual strivings of man, there cannot be any

lasting peace in the society. And this according to the *Sadhakas* of the past, can proceed only from *God-consciousness* on which the teaching of the *Gita* as well as of the *Bible* is based. The sense of *equality* which the so-called progressive people of our times run after, can never be achieved unless the people should understand the ideal put forth by *Krsna*. For he says:

Vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini  
Suni caiva svapake ca panditah sama-darsinah.

The wise people look with the same eyes to the Brahmin as well as to the cow, the dog, the elephant and the outcaste. There are innumerable instances in the life and teachings of the Hebrew prophets and of Lord Jesus Christ which make a similar appeal to man's sense of equability. It will remain an empty idea only till we can realise the fact that we are all children of the Lord, the Creator of the world. It is only after making the sense of equality and fraternity an integral part of our inner life that we can achieve true liberty which, with all the glamour that the political agitators attach to it, is not a simple concept.

There is nothing like absolute liberty in this human society. Such a liberty will often bring in conflicts of the worst kind. It is only when one has understood the real sense of equality and fraternity based on spiritual concepts and identification between God and men as father and children, that the true liberty will be possible. But such a condition will never appear unless the people will be God-conscious. It may be repeated

here that this gives importance to the study of the Gita and the Bible over which a convention has assembled here.

### APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GITA

Now let us see ourselves in the light of these two great books. For the sake of convenience we are to take up the Gita first, for we are to some extent familiar with this book. This, however, does not mean that the work is very easy to understand even for us. That this was commented upon by the great Sankara and Ramanuja, Madhva and other Acaryas, and its modern interpreters include celebrated names such as that of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Vinoba Bhave is a sufficient proof of this. Still it has to be admitted that those who approach this work with a staunch faith in God and an earnest desire for communion with him will also understand it to some extent. This understanding may, however, be of two kinds. One can understand it through a critical examination of its text which among other things deals with the various aspects of human conduct. And it discusses principally man's action (karma), knowledge (jnana) and devotion (bhakti) to God as means of realising His omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience and infinite mercy. This will be an analytical study, and will profit the seeker of God in various ways. There is, however, a great risk in this. With all the instruments of research at his disposal, the student of the Gita may imperceptibly get himself drawn into the quagmire of metaphysical questions which are likely to be

a hindrance to understanding its real purpose and message to mankind. Still it is not altogether possible to avoid some kind of critical attitude in its study. And Lord Kṛṣṇa also expressed several times his very favourable attitude to knowledge which surely involves criticism. For He says in different places the following:

(i) *Na hi jnana sadrsam pavitram iha vidyate.*  
Nothing exists in this world as pure as knowledge.

(ii) *Sarvam jnana-plavenaiva vrijinam santari-syasi.*

By means of this raft of knowledge you will indeed cross this entire ocean of sins.

(iii) *Prio hi jnanino' tyartham aham sa ca mama priyah.*

I am extremely dear to a man of knowledge and he also is dear to me.

Besides, he recommended the acquisition of knowledge for achieving the Yoga and a proper attitude to life to become a true *karmayogin*.

Another approach to the Gita makes this depend upon devotion to God as well as desireless action in the spirit of absolute self-surrender to God, which seems to be the most effective aid in understanding the meaning of the words of Kṛṣṇa as embodied in the Gita. In this regard, His words, *Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana* (Thou hast only right to action and never to its fruits) is the most important. It may be said without any risk of being contradicted that this is the very basis of the teaching of the Gita. For all the evils of our life proceed indeed from desire, i.e., desire for



the fruits of our actions. And this desire has its roots in our ego involving the psychological system which overshadows our true self and brings anxieties, despondency and other miseries when failure attends the action. In fact the overwhelming power of anxiety born out of ego-consciousness enfeebles a person to make him almost incapable of any effort, as exemplified most beautifully in the case of Arjuna himself. It is to dispel this cloud in his mind that Lord Kṛṣṇa imparts unto him the message of *niskama Karma*, detached or desireless action, but action all the same. This message is as universally applicable and needed today as ever before.

In case of success of an action also, it causes misery by initiating fresh desires which may lead to further action courting fresh failures.

It is a well-observed fact that this chain of desires exercising a terrible pressure on our nervous system and through this on the entire psychology leads to many kinds of mental disorders. Any one inquiring of a psychiatrist will learn that almost all the psychosomatic illnesses and neurotic afflictions proceed from unsatisfied desires. Hence if a man can successfully practise the giving up of desires for the fruit of his action, but not for action itself, he will attain the much needed mental equilibrium. And this will ultimately help him in realising peace and happiness as well as all aspects of divine presence in this world.

### ACQUIRING GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

But a class of people who ignore such a possibil-

ity and try to stop all desires by totally giving up action, renounce the world and become *sannyasins*. Lord Kṛṣṇa, however, does not countenance such an attitude, and is completely opposed to it. In fact, he devotes one entire chapter for the clarification of the concept of *sannyasa* and *tyaga*, being questioned thereto. He very clearly says that as God, He is constantly at work for maintaining the creation, and an ideal of being regularly engaged in work should, therefore, be adopted by man. Hence if we claim to be devoted to God, we cannot but show our attachment to him except by taking to the usual work. Herein lies the question of devotion. Now, if a man will go on practising desireless action, he will gradually find it easy to turn himself to God through knowledge. For it is our desire that keeps us separated from him who may be only superficially known to us through knowledge. Turning towards God through an act of devotion to him and placing oneself completely under his grace and guidance releases man from 98 per cent or even 100 per cent of his assumed egoistic responsibility for himself who is but a poor instrument of the all-knowing and all-acting creator. God-consciousness means living in the presence of God as every *bhakta* does and this establishes a supremely blissful identity of hope and faith.

Acquisition of this God-consciousness is the *summum bonum* of our life. This seems to be the real meaning of the Bhagavad Gita. The Holy Bible and especially several incidents in the life of Lord Jesus and his repeated announcements of man as the son of God, contain equally a magnificent

vision of the all-embracing power and purpose of the Lord of Creation.

And discussing all this, Lord Kṛṣṇa refers to the Avatara or God incarnating himself on the earth. The question of revelation also comes in its wake. For does not He reveal himself as the Supreme God-head to Arjuna, his friend and disciple? This was the culminating point of Arjuna's surrender and faith. From all this we can well form a very sound and correct idea of man's relationship with God. And all other questions regarding man's spiritual strivings are more or less clearly connected with this. But these cannot be discussed in the course of a short paper like this. It is in the above light of the Gita that the writer has understood himself.

Now something should be said about the New Testament as a whole which represents the Holy Bible for the bulk of the educated people of this country.

Though I cannot claim to possess any detailed knowledge of this Scripture, I have the greatest regard for the New Testament which contains the sublime teaching of Lord Jesus Christ who to millions and millions of his followers is the revealed son of God. The very high nobility of his teaching has been acknowledged by Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi, the two great builders of modern India. And there are not wanting distinguished individuals among the professed Hindus who equally revere the New Testament and the Gita as the source of their religious inspiration and spiritual solace. Hence, it may be said in general

terms that the Gita and the New Testament are equally great scriptures affecting the lives of Indians of our times, and this should be an example of spiritual cooperation for the nations of the world. It seems to us not an accident of history but as the plan of the Divine Creator that He has brought together the two great religions, Hinduism and Christianity, and their active followers in the same country which is India.

# In Search of Spirituality: The Message of the Bible

Fr. Jyotirmayananda

*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes  
aguarum ita desiderat anima mea ad te dominum.*

Psalmum 41

As soon as I was given the task of instructing souls, I realized at a glance that the task was beyond my strength; so quickly taking refuge in our Lord's arms, I imitated those babes who when frightened hide their faces on their father's shoulders. Thou seest Lord, I cried, how weak I am; but if through me thou canst feed them. Then pour forth on me abundantly, and without quitting the shelter of your arms; I will give to those who come asking for food. If they find it to their liking I will not be at all puffed up. If, on the contrary, they find fault with its bitterness, I will not be disturbed and will take care to give them none other, and will try to persuade them that it comes from you and not from me, O Lord.

—St. Theresa

The Judeo-Christian tradition pictures an entire people waiting and longing for a deliverer hence the opening latin sloka. In moving imagery it follows a desperately thirsty deer negotiating miles of territory in search of drinking water. Those who



know zoology or something of the animal kingdom would no doubt be aware that deers only drink of running water. In two verses so pregnant with meaning the psalmist pines: just as the deer yearns for running water, so is my soul longing for thee, O Lord.

A study of ancient and biblical history is central to the understanding of the Bible. It is stupidity to embrace or pass judgement on most things before this crucial prelude. With your indulgence we go to take up an examination of the "History of salvation in the Judeo-Christian tradition." Our motive "in no way envisages any kind of comparative or competitive study with the Gita, whose language we presume to borrow and whose meaning we would chance an interpretation of, but rather in openness and humility a groping to understand and make an effort to share those insights conducive to our individual development."

Moreover, what we would like to ascertain through this exposure is much more than a mere intellectual excursion; it is rather like an intuitive experience, and our question is: "Whether or not the universal self and his perennial message could be discerned amidst the recounting of the records of this cultural tradition."

Our first postulation is that in dealing with the origins of the Judeo-Christian tradition we are treating first and foremost "A family history" whose historicity starts with the Family of Abraham, a people from Ur, who may have started a progressive emigration, probably simply on the kind of impulse which has always motivated

families and individuals to roam the world. Anxious to introduce its intention, the Judeo-Christian tradition gives a rather noble interpretation to this simple fact by proposing that Abraham felt dissatisfied with the idolatry of his age and started a journey in faith in blind response to a conditioning process. Soon he felt he was under a compulsion, the burden of his message was that from him would come a people, who would be in a special relationship with the universal self. This family would be used to spread an awareness of the divine self to all the world.

But Abraham had to wait a long time before his dream even seemed a possibility and the early narratives of the Bible show the incredible faith of Abraham and his wife Sara, who were already quite old when the call came. Abraham's acceptance of God's will and Sara's willingness to be even disposed to risk the loss of her husband to set the stage of salvation in motion by allowing him to sleep with another woman is ample testimony with a message for us all. At pains to convince us of the character and virtue of its hero the biblical narrative takes us to the edge of our seats and hope with the story of Abraham's preparation to sacrifice the whole salvation fulfilment—his son Isaac, the dearest thing to his heart (Gen. 20, verses 1-12).

Most of the remaining chapters of Genesis, the first of the Christian-God books are occupied with the passing of the promise to Isaac, his trials and ill-success and his handing over of the Baton to Jacob from whom it is believed the name Israel came. Jacob was a prosperous man with 12 sons

of whom Joseph is best known for the intrigues and treachery of his brothers who sold him into Egypt. The biblical author is not without purpose in relating the tales of Jacob and Esau, on the one hand, and Jacob and his sons, on the other. For here he situates one of the periodic famines, when no rain meant no crops and the family is watched as they journey to the world's granary, Egypt, in search of food, only to find their long "lost" brother food minister of Egypt—a sign of divine retribution.

Up to this time one gets the idea of a people being slowly purified by suffering as gold is in the furnace. But plenty comes. The people grow soft and degenerate, they seem on the point of thwarting the divine plan and their noble calling. So the sacred writer details the intricate movements of the divine amidst a 400-year captivity showing the preservation, training and leadership of Moses. Once the freedom leap was made and independence achieved the nation seemed here to have begun the formulation and transmission of its history through oral tradition.

Man's memory is very short, and Moses had much difficulty in uniting these several tribes to the worship of one God. So we witness a further distilling of the people for 40 years in the desert. There is the significant contribution of Moses' leadership which merits examination—the ten commandments. Here we come up against a feature of religious attitude which we would later examine in detail. To digress a little, the monogamous marriage arrangement was the end-result of thousands

of years of trial and error; witness that Abraham and many of the Judeo-Christian models had several wives; and to put the stamp of God on it and surround its observance with reward and punishment still does not make it a divine revelation.

The ten commandments, as has recently been disclosed by modern archeology, is copied from the treaty which a very vigorous race, the Hittites, who had a dynamic sway just before this time, used to leave with their conquered peoples. Moses, learned in history at the court of the Pharaohs, knew of this pact. When time came he replaced the word king by God. Ex. 20 added a few pertinent words, and enacted it as God's law. Fact or no fact the sacred writer proceeds with the unfolding of divine revelation and staggers our imagination by leading the people to the fulfilment of a promise made to Abraham—the gift of a land flowing with milk and honey.

Like Vyasa of the Gita he wishes to teach through the events of history and he has given biblical scholarship a clue that the books of the Bible were written centuries later than the actual events. The truth of the fact is that caanan was very hard to subdue besides being a very barren country. But for the sacred writer in theological realities a gift does not rule out work and struggle. In this way he does not fall victim to the excess of many modern teachers who dismiss as unimportant the series of hardships and experiences through which they cycled in their development. Man and mothers seem to be endowed with this capacity to forget something.

We have all experienced how simple and useless the road to the attainment of some inner realization seem from the standpoint of this new dimension and we are apt to propose it as such. Many a discerning eye has noticed that even in interior institutional life disciples seemed to progress if the teacher himself was still actively engaged in his *tapas* whereas there is usually observed a type of spiritual stagnation if he was "there" already or after his death. For in some unconscious way people were led into believing that the terrain was easy.

As life grew more settled many problems arose and we have this people loosely organized in times of stress under charismatic leaders of whom Samson and Samuel were the most notable. The sacred writer takes it for granted that his addresses are conversant with the topography of Palestine as he replaces his Judges by Kings. He admits Israel as a land and a people living in perpetual insecurity being the passage-way or high-road between north and south. At this time the great nations of the world are exhausting each other for conquest of the world and this highway is strategic.

Disgusted with their lot and the inadequacy of the charismatic leadership Samuel bends to their demand; for a king Saul is constrained with much pleading and is solemnly acclaimed as God's anointed. At first Saul continued to rule from his farmyard at home until the sacred writer shows us that his ego-consciousness came to him. His position and privileges got to his head and he ignores the wishes of his people, contravenes the



designs of Samuel and is rejected in favour of another.

At Saul's court soothing his nerves by singing and playing his harp was David, a young shepherd possessed of many talents. David's selection is made capital since the sacred author has a very special message for us in presenting his character-sketch. What most of us remember of David's life are his murders, his women, his wine and his psalms. Few of us are aware that David was anointed from childhood.

The lesson of David's life shows a leader being cycled through a great maze of complex experiences by the universal mind so that later as ruler and judge he may be better able to identify with all men. He also falls a prey to a common error of leadership, when the awareness of his anointing came to him and he became trapped in the "maya" himself, loses sight of his dependence on the ultimate which is the very condition for his use as a vehicle or channel of divine mediation.

We, nevertheless, all love David because he was himself a man of great love but the lesson of his failures was still in the mind of the Christian church in the middle ages when all kings had read to them as a charter for their lives the counsel of St. Benedict for the Abbot. One is time and again struck by its insistence on one central theme "Let the Abbot keep his weakness and limitations (as a beacon to light the way of his decisions regarding his monks) always before his eyes, and let him so adapt himself to their different temperaments, imitating the model of Christ who would leave the

99 sheep to go after the one which was lost, so that he may not suffer the loss of any, but may rejoice in the increase of his flock.

### GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR MANKIND

The picture painted for us up to now by the sacred writer of the Judeo-Christian tradition is that of a God who loved his people precisely because they had nothing in them to love but their scars, their weakness and their limitations. It was this which invited his attention and compassion. This same idea is at the heart of Christian theology that individuals who have nothing are better vehicles for the working of the divine than those full of themselves and set in their ways.

Full with messages for us and needing to find an author for much of the wisdom which he has collected from the lands around, the sacred writer spares no effort in introducing a man who had very little to recommend himself except that he had a very powerful father whose court had attracted many eminent and wise men in whose company the young bastard had to gather some semblance of discrimination. It was Solomon who built the temple thereby giving the priests their proper place. The priests were, as usual, the guardians of culture and learning; so they wrote many pieces in his name. The degeneracy of his court is sold when we notice at this time the working of a divine theology in a history of selection and rejection. A great part of the people are rejected as being of no use in the furtherance of the transcendent purpose of God.

If the independence movement began at the Exodus, it was achieved here where we are going to situate the writing of the early books of the Christian Bible. Independence is always an occasion for historical accounts. First, all the material is collected; this took the sacred writer back to Abraham but he needs to bridge the gap between father Abraham and the beginning of the world; so he collects all the cosmological stories floating around. With very definite ideas in mind and a certain advancement of religious insight he bestows eternity to this Jewish family history. Israel has one God whose name is Jahweh who made the world and all things.

Were we to pardon the presumption of the sacred writer to make light of scientific historical facts in preference to the timeless knowledge of interior wisdom we would no doubt understand the operative phrase of modern biblical scholarship: "What the sacred writer intended to say, that is the meaning of sacred scripture." *Not what he said.* With this in mind not only the Christian Bible but all sacred writing take on a new meaning and import: the intention or message of the writer—what is called in exegesis the *sensus plenior*, the deeper interpretation. It is at this level that the Gita steals our admiration. The war is going on in our own hearts and minds.

As we leave Solomon and follow the division of the kingdom we witness the arrival of a group of "madmen who as the kingdom degenerates, reminded the people of their initial purpose and the promises which their fathers made of old. We en-

counter here again another aspect of the self-same reality observed in David, namely, weak vessels being better vehicles for universal movements than strong ones. Indeed these "neurotics" among whom John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul are later to be numbered make by far the best contribution to the unfoldment of interior wisdom in the Judeo-Christian tradition. You may no doubt be familiar with Elijah, who ascended into heaven in a chakra, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah.

These prophets continue their ranting and railing until the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom around 700 B.C. under king Sargon and the capture of Jerusalem two centuries later by the Babylonians. Around the stories of Daniel the biblical author paints a vivid picture of his subjugated people.

Persia conquers Babylon and the people are freed by Cyrus who is interpreted as a chosen instrument of the divine. The few people who return, take back a renewed sense of the exclusiveness of their relationship to the universal self. I might add in passing as a point of interest that modern historians situate here the origin of the essenic monks who are believed later to have trained John the Baptist and who had a great influence on the Christ. A new empire comes into being and Alexander with his attractive Greek culture robbed the Jews of nearly every vestige of divine orientation. For now using ordinary Greek wisdom to understand divine revelation a loose and a strict interpretation attract many subscribers—the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The world changed hands again and the Romans came in charge with their insistence on order or brutal retributions. Small wonder that the "remnant" group of persevering Jews longs for a messiah, an earthly ruler who would deliver them from the burden of Roman domination. Now the sacred writer can make a theological progression; John comes on the scene: It is your sins which are responsible for your plight—repent; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. First Elizabeth and later Simeon accept that Jesus is the anointed one. The narratives surrounding Jesus's birth are gems of divine revelation—a simple virgin is chosen: *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae*, a leader bows out gracefully: *nunc dimittis*. Their acceptance is ratified by three *yantric* and astrological scholars from the East who were once more right about the advent of an *Avatara*. They come to worship where the star guided them.

The stage is set of a people on the brink of helplessness yearning for a deliverer. Among the faithful few are Zachariah and his wife, Joseph, Mary and Simeon. The sacred writer has taken us on a long progressive journey from the beginning of the world until now. There is a design intrinsic in cosmic law that everyone should cycle to perfection. The universal mind never tired of assisting sends patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets and sages—all "fail." He goes to the extreme of his love and sends his only son—an *Avatara*—evil must not triumph over Good. This is the intention of the sacred writer. To confuse his issue with questions like: "When will you establish the



Kingdom?" or "Who is greatest in the kingdom?" is to miss his whole point.

Now, he wishes to pitch us on another level of consciousness (as Krsna does with Arjuna), an altogether new stage. The theology is intense, his saviour is different. He calls no longer for sacrifice or discipline or prayers or study or knowledge or wisdom. He seems to propose none of the old standards; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The only law is love and he has come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. This is no ascetic—He accepts hospitality freely. No observer of mere laws: contravenes the Sabbath: no stickler to conventional rules: he keeps the company of blatant sinners. No *pujari*: Your father already knows what is good for you: no neurotic fanatic: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; observe the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields; on the one hand none will fall to the ground without His knowledge; on the other, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.

He is no school master. Take out the block in your own eye and you will better be able to see the mote in your brother's. No word-merchant: by their fruits you will know them. The sacred writer presents us with the greatest story-teller of all times. No new wine, in old wine skins. Who is your neighbour? Prodigal son: you can come back home. Knock, Knock importunate friend, compel him to attend. Build on rock, not on sand. Never mind mustard seed, you can grow into a big tree. He who wants to be first must accept to be last.

And when you shall have done all these things do not commend yourself, rather say we are unprofitable servants, for we have only done that which we ought to have done.

If ever there was an aware being, the sacred writer shows us it was Christ: a man with a relationship of identity to the universal self, endowed with an amazing authority and preaching a strange doctrine (Matt. 5). A man for whom love was supreme. No dreamlike, soppy state, but a more learned and deed-seated disposition. As we leave the sacred writer, his message and narrative, he leaves no doubt in our minds about the achievement of his purpose for he is actually able to define through his latest torchbearer, St. Paul (Cor.), the love requirement, which leaves many of us with a mighty road to tread.

#### HINDU NEW TESTAMENT—AN APPRECIATION

"Arjuna," Krsna asks "is this hour of battle the time for scruples and fancies?" The sacred writer of the Gita manages a bold arrest on our attention in Krsna's very first utterance. In a deeper sense he could well be speaking to all soul seekers even today in man's separate movements and quests after truth. He seems to have divided divinity by institutionalizing spirituality. This is the age of the abandonment of separatism in every walk of life. The hour of salvation is no time for claiming monopolies of the truth but a time for openness and humility. Religion itself should have only one fundamental aim. To serve the truth and its institutions should be wide enough to embrace all truth.

The spiritual life is also a science and we are reminded of a phenomenon in the physical sciences where the same truth is discovered at the same time in different places.

In a very strange way, we all seem to have come in this age to Arjuna's very state, a state in which even our rightness seems to be wrong, or at least less right, and our consciousness seems to have found that chink in our armour and we are willing to allow for the possibility that there may be other values and that others may also have some truth. "They have bona too" (Encyclical on Ecu-menism).

Whether the Gita is taken wholesale out of the *Mahabharata* or is a separate work, in which case the sacred writer is merely pitching his revelation amidst this historical setting, he deserves our commendation for the choice of his milieu. He feels he has a great wealth of enlightenment to unfold to his audience, some supremely higher wisdom to disclose; so he chooses the scene of war to give relief to Arjuna's crisis.

He hints briefly that peaceful negotiations have broken down; so the impending war is inevitable. His foe-consumer is a kashatiran. The battle promises to be another "pearl harbour;" there is much at stake in the war with two opposing sets of values battling for supremacy. He implies that our prologue, Sanjaya and blind Dhritarashtra have quite different values and after Arjuna states his problem, he introduces the lord of values, Krsna.

It is the battlefield itself which occasions the crucial moment in Arjuna's life. The stark real-

ization hit him; he has to fight against his own, his kinsmen and teachers. Now his sense of values comes in conflict with his system of values, something is at odds in his hierarchy, it is lacking, he thinks it is right to fight but he feels "wrong."

To a world at war because, like Arjuna, it lacks the intellectual and spiritual prerequisites for peace, the sacred writer of the Gita seems to be addressing his message. Sanjaya describes Arjuna's bewilderment and his appeal to Krsna for help. He is not immediately satisfied. His questions are followed many times by objections. Nevertheless he is a model for us all. He is in search for the truth—the salvation concept. He wants to know the highest good in the light of which all his problems can be solved. His total value reference comes up for screening—ethical, religious, social, political and traditional. All life is involved. The sacred writer gives a most detailed psychological analysis of the problem and staggers us with his treatment of the consciousness which produced the problem. He puts us in mind of the crisis of Jonah in Ninevah. His analytical intelligence resembles that of Paul of Tarsus but the layout and literary centre is definitely twin to the book of Job.

The more we research the more we ask ourselves; was there before a close contact between the East and West? Was there a historical and sociological relatedness? He is indeed adventurous when he explains all of life in this simple yoga *sastra*, this short treatise on Brahma-vidya, this text-book on supra-psychology. He gets us all interested in Yoga; in fact he must himself be a *yogin*. He

dwarfs us with the breath of yoga and the yogic paths and reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's words: "All life is Yoga." He is perhaps the most systematic of the sacred authors and he evolves not only upwards but also outwards. His progression is spiral.

Since it is the mind that creates the problem, Krsna does not suggest that the mind will solve the problem; he therefore recommends to opt out of the mind and make a leap in consciousness. Not to escape the battlefield but to give everything a different dimension, a higher standpoint.

Towards the end our prologue himself who had filled up many a gap for us, stops reporting and admits a personal conviction. "Such were the words that thrilled my heart, that marvellous discourse." But he has to be pardoned, for Arjuna's resignation wins it from him, "my delusions have been dispelled," "my mind stands firm; its doubts are ended." This is no wild boast of the sacred writer when he suggests as his concluding words: "Here is good and peace, and triumph and glory. Om."



# The Crucial Hour

H. H. Sri Kumara Swamiji

In all movements, in every great outburst of human action, in each cataclysm of high magnitude, it is the *zeitgeist*, the Time spirit which expresses itself. The *zeitgeist* is the power that works in secret in the heart of humanity manifesting itself in the perpetual surge of men, institutions and events. The mighty hand of the Time spirit goes abroad and moulds the progress of the world and the destiny of the nations. Fortunately, for the order of things there is a secret will, a supreme Force, an intelligent idea which rules the world and all its destinies. It is also at work among the nations. All obey without recognising it; all hasten towards the goal which it assigns without perceiving it, their eyes fixed on their own vain dreams. It utilises the calculations of their egoism and favours or confounds them as they help or hinder its purpose. Some it selects as obstacles so that upon them it may concentrate its forces; and it breaks the obstacles when they have served its end. Willingly or not, all are the tools of the *zeitgeist* that has created the nations out of the associated clans, tribes and provinces. It is this Time-spirit which, having first mingled them together in struggle, sacrifices—all their liberty to the power and unity of the great commonwealth. It is this which,

to accomplish further progress, now tramples under foot its former works and throws once more into the crucible of transformation collective egoisms and anarchic sovereignties. For beyond all their limitations small or great, it seeks to create the vaster entities of the future. Understand then the secret of this chaos which today gathers the nations into its clasp, already completing them to form, whether they will it or not, the unified world-state of tomorrow.

In the eleventh canto of the Gita, Sri Krsna manifests to Arjuna his world-form as the mighty Time-spirit, when Arjuna willed to cast aside his bow and said, "This is a sin I do and a great destruction of men and brothers I will forbear." Sri Krsna showed his terrific and marvellous vision ubiquitous in form and unique in substance, to stamp the truth of things upon his imagination. Thus run the stanzas that describe the vision, "I am the mighty world-destroying Time now engaged in wiping out the world. Even without you the warriors arranged in hostile armies shall not live. You therefore arise and obtain fame, conquer the enemies and enjoy the unrivalled kingdom. By me have they been verily slain already. You be merely an occasion, O Savyasacin."

The great and memorable even of Kuruksetra is indicative of the irresistible will of the *zeitgeist*. When the *zeitgeist* or the Time-spirit moves in a settled direction, then the whole forces of the world are called in to swell the established current towards the purpose decreed. That which consciously helps swells it, but that which hinders swells

it still more. Those who would have done everything possible to avert the calamity, helped its coming by their action or inaction; those who had a glimpse of it strove in vain to stop the course of events. It was only then that men came to know how like rivers speeding towards the sea, like moths swinging towards the lighted flame, all that splendid, powerful and arrogant Indian world with its kings and armies, with its weapons and its chariots were rushing towards destruction willed by the *zeitgeist*.

Who could arrest the trend of events? Who could resist the purpose of the *zeitgeist*? There were capable men in India then by the hundred—great philosophers and statesmen, leaders of thought and action. There was the efflorescence of a mighty intellectual civilisation at its height. *Zeitgeist* overbore them all. What was true of the great slaying at Kuruksetra is true of all things that are destined to perish in the world.

That which emerges out of Kuruksetra is a power, *sakti* of truth to destroy the great falsehood of the world, falsehood in the life of men and nations; falsehood in all relationships—family, social, national and international; falsehood in love, in labour, in the state—and in religion; falsehood between man and man, between man and God. That which comes is a power, a *sakti* of order and harmony; it is a power of justice. The anarchic reign of the nations comes to an end; that of federations—those larger links in the future unity—begins. The reign of jealous gods, the solitary god, the reign of intolerant religions comes to an end;

that of the Infinite, the ineffable one whose glory the gods suffice not to manifest, begins. Nothing can stay the rising tide, the rushing wind, the lightning flash. Nothing can stay the coming future. Who can chain the living forces? Bury them and they germinate, compress them and they explode. All nations shall break their chains asunder—the inner ones more shameful, those outer ones more cruel. Happy are those whose power is not built upon the exploitation of the weak; from this weakness are born the forces of tomorrow.

#### DESTRUCTION ALONGSIDE GROWTH

It is a far cry from the Gita to the Gospels. In the sayings of Christ which have been called apocalyptic, the language itself is strained in order to give the picture of extreme desolation and confusion; for He describes the cataclysmal times thus: "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earthquakes in diverse places and there will be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of the sorrows." In a later passage the whole scene becomes more lurid still with tokens of dismay. "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation. But in those days, after the tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall fall. And then shall they see the son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory."

There is a reference to the parable of fig tree which comes in the midst of the picture of ultimate desolation—the stars falling from the sky and the powers of heaven being shaken. Now learn, says Christ, “the parable of the fig tree. When her branch is yet tender and put forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so ye in like manner, when ye shall see things come to pass know that the kingdom of God is nigh, even at the doors.” We have to resolve those contradictions in Christ’s sayings, the normal and the abnormal, the destructive and the constructive. We cannot take short cuts and deal with one side only as if that were final. It has been said that only an artist can bring unity into the contradictions which are inherent in human life and Christ is such an artist speaking to us in the Gospels. He boldly faces all facts of human life—the bad as well as the good. He does not ignore its awful side. God is to be known by us in the whirlwind, the earthquake and the fire, as well as through the still small voice.

There is a parable which embodies within a single whole the two processes of nature, the process of silent growth and the act of sudden destruction. This is the parable of the tares and the wheat. The teaching is remarkable. The more we study it, the more we experience how deeply it goes down into the mystery of our human existence. The good seed first springs up in the soil of human life; then, later on, it is discovered that tares have been sown also among the wheat. The question is asked, whether the tares should be rooted out at once and the answer is, “No, let both grow together until



the harvest." When the harvest is ripe, the tares will be burnt and the good seed garnered safely into the store house. Until the harvest, there is then a moment in human history when destruction of evil, relentless and inevitable, become a necessity. This implies a necessary place for revolution. Life cannot be expected to be one continuous unbroken chain. There is a sense in which Christ's teaching is essentially catastrophic. We have already seen that in the Gita, there is the singular doctrine of a Destruction which is not an end in itself, but purely and wholly a means to renewal of creative and productive activity. The more we study carefully the Gita, the more we can see the inner harmony with this aspect of Christ's teaching in the Gospels.

The great world city of the first age of the Christian Church which stood upon the seven hills, robed in scarlet and sitting as a queen, was at the height of its power and dominion. It had its traffic of merchandise and gold, houses and slaves. Mystically, its name was Babylon but in history its name was Rome—that vast imperial civilisation around the Mediterranean basin. The writer of the Book of Revelation, living in the midst of slavery and cruelty and avarice of this imperialism, sees in vision its sudden and terrible destruction. "Babylon the Great," he cries, "is fallen, is fallen and is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." The mighty princes and merchants, the kings of the earth stand afar off for fear of her desolation and cry aloud—Alas, alas, that great

city Babylon, that mighty city; For in one hour, thy judgment is come."

The great modern world city of commercial greed and racial exploitation is standing forth upon the seven hills today, clothed in scarlet and robed as a queen. There is no single centre of power such as Rome clearly was in the early age of the Church. Mystically, the name of this new world city is still Babylon—Babylon the great. But in modern history its name is London and Paris, New York and Moscow, Tokyo and Delhi, Peking and Hongkong with many other names besides. For the world empire of man is no longer confined to the boundaries of the tiny Mediterranean sea. It has become conterminous with the human race itself in its greed and rapacity, in its gigantic and crushing material organisation. The vast oceans are under its sway as well as the continents.

Today we find that no stir of life is manifest in the body of Humanity whether it is a feverish restlessness of the sick patient to shake off disease or the healthy circulation which keeps the body normal. Selfishness and greed, lust and passion together with the love of money are still the oppressors. It is against these, in every shape and form, that the battle has to be waged. The final victory is won when the inner heart is converted and not before.

#### NEW ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

Humanity is now at the world's crucial hour which must determine whether heaven or hell is to reign over the world. Today it must choose bet-

ween two paths—the one which descends and the other which ascends; the one where it is called by the forces from below, the forces of lower life where it is driven through blood and mud, by the powers of the infernal civilisation. The other is the higher path, not yet hewn for the world but now to be opened through fire by the powers of light, to lead it towards the new civilisation of spirit. We have to learn which forces will conquer in this struggle and whether the whole world will be handed over to that which has corrupted the peoples, whether the world will be dominated by the obscure spirit of civilisation which, thinking to master matter by material means, has become its slave. It was they who in their madness kindled the conflagration. For the sake of the world's salvation it must be extinguished. Lo! there comes into the world the Lord of Justice and Judgment bearing fire, the awful and divine fire, the fire of sacrifice and purification. And at his approach all the corruption of the world rises up; it rises against him. Thus shall spread the fire of sacrifice; it shall burn over all the earth until the earth be purified.

To save the nations from chastisement a few just men are enough. For they are the eyes of God upon the peoples, the witnesses of the Lord before the nations and of the nations before the Lord. In the world there are seers who enlighten and direct the blind forces brooding over the blind masses, thinkers who think for destiny. It is this destiny, it is this will that presides over the play of circumstances, over the unfolding of the great drama. What then, if not a sovereign Will, could have

made the wars happen, against the will of all and to the complete exhaustion of all? What then could, with such certainty of calculation, have kept so constant the unstable, equilibrium of forces, so immovable the beam of these scales into which one by one all the nations are being thrown? It is no more the usual, the customary which takes place; it is the unexpected, the impossible that happens. It is no more the past but the future which creates the present. It is no more the peace which is the fear of collision between equals, but it is the peace which heralds the harmony of life, the creative action. Such is the work of the supreme will. The reign of peace shall come, it will come through the refusal to wage war. That all the nations may lay down their arms, one must needs make a beginning. As it needed but one to arm for all to imitate him, so it needs but one to disarm that all be compelled to follow his example, compelled by a force stronger than that of all the rulers of the world, by the force of idea which creates and transforms, by the power of spirit which blows where it wills. It is not the mildness of the weak but that of the strong, it is the strength of a still greater heroism that will make war impossible. It is a will more invisible, more superhuman which will transform both peace and war. If you will have peace replace war, make that peace more dominant, more heroic even than war, make it more disinterested, more fecund in abnegation, in self-surrender, in self-sacrifice than war itself. That peace alone will overcome war in which man will have overcome himself.

This new order cannot spring from the old disorder. It is not yet great enough; therefore shall it be changed into chaos, and it is that chaos which is now coming over the world. Of this alone can be born the world which is to come. Through it Destiny will renew the miracle of creation. It is thus that with each greater obstacle the Lord has made greater his plan of victory. The future of humanity then cannot be merely that of human peace founded upon a society of selfish nations. That is too little. It cannot be merely that of a world unity founded upon the greater despotism of larger world-units; this too does not attain to the stature of the future; that which will spring from the coming chaos is all this and it is more. Yes, more than the nations willed, for the sword shall have to be beaten into a ploughshare, a ploughshare in the hand of the Lord, to plough the peoples, to harrow the soil of their hardened past, to prepare them all for the harvest of the future.



# The Yoga of Conflict

Agnes Kunz

The first chapter of the Gita called "the Yoga of Dejection of Arjuna" is usually quickly dismissed as an introduction to the following discourse. Yet it is called a "Yoga." At first sight this seems a paradox. If Yoga means unification, how can dejection be a Yoga? Or is there some possibility of unification even in dejection; a possibility to conceive darkness not only penetrated or dispelled by the light, but darkness itself as light?

"God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness." How come that He appears to us more often than not, as utter darkness? How come that in the Avatara form, in which He enters into dialogue with Arjuna, the Pandava, "the white one," He is called Krsna, "the dark one"?

At the beginning, the lines are clearly defined: two armies in battle line on Kuruksetra, significantly called "Dharma-ksetra," the first verse of the Gita: "*Dharmaksetre Kuruksetre. . .*" Black and white as opposites, without doubt. Justice and truth are certainly with white, attacked by the unjust enemy, the powerful usurper. But suddenly the conflict moves to another level, from plain clearcut war for the sake of power to a moral dilemma.

Suddenly we don't know any more why and

what for we fight, nor how and why those people on the other side can be enemies, having such familiar faces! On the other side now stands everything what until now we had considered as moral and dutiful and religious: The relatives, the elders, the gurus, law and order: Dharma! How can we fight! Everything seems to be upside down now, against any reason, illogical, absurd.

Till this very moment we were quite sure that we have known what is good or bad, wrong or right, that we were able to discern between virtue and vice, between black and white. And now, in this dark hour of doubt and distress, we realize at least one thing: That this kind of knowledge was an illusion, ignorance of the real facts. Does this hour of darkness, perhaps, become the dawn of enlightenment? We open our eyes to discover that we are blind.

Is this dilemma still a moral one, or what else is it? How do we know, if we have to fight or not to fight?

Let us look into ourselves, and let us look around in this world; and let us try to look critically without deceiving ourselves again, and let us ask this question: Are all those conflicts, which we cannot simply ignore in an I-don't-care attitude, conflicts between reason and unreason, or between moral and immoral? If they were, they could be sorted out, most probably, by reasonable and moral people. But as we have seen, they obviously cannot. . . troubled in his mind, Arjuna laid down his bow." Thus ends the first chapter. There is despair. Eventually, if we go on with it consequently,

suicide. Or escape—into some Utopia, some ideology, yoga, religion, drugs, whatever may suit our individual taste and character. How should we be responsible! Why should we care! “I will not fight!” I give up. Or “take my life from me, because I am not better than my fathers”—are the words of Elias, the prophet, in the desert under the juniper tree, in a similar situation. (I Kings 19:4). But the appearing Angel cannot leave him in peace: “Get up and eat! You still have to go a long way!”

“Arise! is the word by which Kṛṣṇa shakes up Arjuna at the beginning of the next chapter on Samkhya yoga, “the Yoga of Discriminative Wisdom.”

And now? Is Kṛṣṇa offering an escape into philosophy? Or what else is the meaning of this elaborate discussion, which, at first sight, has nothing to do with Arjuna’s urgent problem?

There are countless possible interpretations. One concrete meaning we may pick out now for our meditation.

Troubled with conflict, we are looking for a solution. Escape is no solution. Neither thinking nor moralizing brought the solution. Thus, if there should be any solution at all, it could only be found at again another level: “Arise!”

Rise to that level, which is here and now between the two armies, in the middle of this battlefield, where you are bound to fight, but in a “here,” not limited to space, in a “now” not limited to time, because: “There was never a time, when I was not!” (2, 12). These familiar faces of “flesh and

blood," which you are going to kill or not to kill—these are not the real enemy! These contrary views on the intellectual level, these ideological differences; no, this is not what you have to face in this battle. Because all this comes and goes and changes and goes and comes again. All this is changeable and perishable. And here is your choice: Between the perishable and the *imperishable*!

Chapter VIII of the Gita speaks of the two different ways—both to be understood as spiritual ways—though in sloka 23 symbolically called "times," but both to be considered everlasting, infinite: the way of everlasting death, visualized in the Gita as endless return from death to death, in contrast to the way towards everlasting, indestructible Life, from which there is no return (VIII. 26).

The Gita holds the view that every expectation of reward belongs to the way of death. Every concern with one's own brings one back to his own perishable existence. We are prisoners in our self-constructed prison. And be it even a pleasantly furnished "heavenly" prison with its "reward in heaven" for our good moral deeds, for giving alms and doing "noble dedicated work."

Looking after one's own life and soul, leads, in the words of Christ, to losing it. Are we not often having reached a certain "spirituality," too much concerned with our own spiritual progress? Are these, perhaps, "the spiritual dangers in the heavens," of which Paul writes in Ephesians (6:13)?

The two ways cannot be classified any more in a materialistic and spiritualistic or lower and higher walks of life. The difference is of a much more

subtle kind. In these spiritual spheres, "not of flesh and blood," we are confronted with "principal powers and cosmic forces of darkness" (Eph. 6:12).

The dilemma of Kuruksetra is in close contact with the heavenly battle between, Mikhael and the Dragon, who is called the "Diabolos," the "one who speaks queer," and who is, according to the vulgata (Rev. 12:9) "projected on earth."

This battle we have certainly not to understand as an historic past event in some "time" in the beginning of creation, but as an everpresent situation. "Now"—Jesus calls out in expectation of his own human disaster—"Now is the crisis of this cosmos! Now the Archont of this world (the *malik* of this Ksetra, this field of battle) shall be thrown out!" (John 12:31).

"Now my soul is in trouble. What should I say? Father, save me from this hour!" (John 12:27)

"Now" we are in conflict, in the darkest depths, where, as it seems, not even the Son of God finds his way: "Why did you forsake me, my God!"

And yet he had continued his sentence that "the prince of this world shall be thrown out": "... when I will be lifted up, then I will attract every thing to Me!" (12:32). Did he say this only to foretell the way of his death on the cross? And he goes on: "Still for a while now, the light is in you"—even in this hour of crisis!—"may not darkness overwhelm you" (12:35).

In chapter XVI of the Gita, Krsna speaks to Arjuna of the dark and the bright powers, the *Asuric* and the *Daivic* forces and qualities, and how to discern them. Our first impression may be that



this is merely a code of moral conduct with its simple division in black and white, where again everything is clearly and orderly defined.

Then, when we look deeper, trying to see the whole picture, still undivided, it does not look at all whole, but bewildering and confusing. "Therefore," says Krsna, "let the scripture be your guide" (XVI. 24).

The scripture means, in the view of every religion the Word of God, not the mental constructions of man. Only from this viewpoint, from the point of the "knower of the field," from the other level, we will be able to have an outlook at the reality here and there.

"*En Kyrio* — the Lord, be comforted," writes Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. "In the Lord, and in the power of His strength" (6,10), using His weapons against the methods of the diabolos, the queer talker, the liar "the accuser," as he is called somewhere. In the encounter with crooked, even diabolical methods, tempted to fight back in the same manner, we may do well to remember this spiritual advice.

This *En Kyrio*—perhaps it is the key which the Lord is handing over to Arjuna at the end of the dialogue in the chariot, in the worlds of XVIII, 66: "Renounce all the Dharma," all moral support, your belief in righteousness, in the law and in family ties, even the concern with your own salvation!

"In ME alone take your refuge!"

The moral and righteous soul, white, plain and onefolded, did first need to unfold itself, to break

into contrasting colours of conflict, and so to become able and ready to be drawn towards fulfilment, where contrasts are absorbed into black fullness.

This is *vraja*, the refuge, the secret and hidden enclosure of Krsna, the dark one. Take refuge—in the darkness! You may refuse, afraid of the depths, drift away sharing the refusal of the sometimes bright shining Asuras; go your own way, say no. . . This is the real and only decision you have to make: Refusal or acceptance—if required even of the sword—; towards or away; turning the wheel or—though being in it, not touched by it, because only concerned with THAT: *En Kyrio!*

This is *vraja* and *vraja* is *moksa*. The chariot in the middle of the battlefield between the two armies, the two opposite powers, becomes *vraja*—if you accept *Vraja*—as the centre of the crossing lines, where the crossing is absorbed into a single point, and where thus is no crossing any more.

Uplifted on the cross, drowned into the dark depths of God, the Lord is drawing everything from all the contrary and conflicting directions, to Him.

“Do not be afraid,” says the dark Lord—to take your rest in my darkness! “I AM delivering you from the evil!” (XVIII. 66).

And we may add the words of Christ: “In the world you have fear. But see: I have overcome the World!”

# The Challenge of Revelation

Rev. Dr. D. C. Scott

What do we mean by revelation? This is a question to which much hard thinking and careful writing have been devoted by Christians, among others, in recent years; and indeed there is a general awareness that it is being answered today in a way that sounds very different from the traditional formulations. But before looking at the present let us very briefly remind ourselves of the stages by which the change has come about.

Throughout the greater part of Christian history the question was not thought to be a difficult one. It was answered in terms of the distinction between revealed and natural or rational knowledge, and an intelligent schoolboy could have told what that distinction was. He would have explained that there are two sharply contrasted ways in which men have gained knowledge of God and things divine—by the unaided exercise of their own powers of thinking, and by direct communication from God Himself. If instead of the schoolboy you had consulted a learned theologian, you would have received very much the same answer. Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th century, would tell you on the one hand of “an ascent, by the natural light of reason, through created things to the knowledge of God,” and on the other of “a descent, by the mode of revelation, of divine truth which exceeds the

human intellect, yet not as demonstrated to our sight but as a communication delivered for our belief. If your theologian belonged to an earlier period of the Middle Ages in Europe instead of the 13th century, he would perhaps encourage you to hope that most of our available knowledge of God could be approached from either direction.

But Aquinas and most of his successors would carry the distinction, not only to the two ways of knowing, but to the respective areas of knowledge to which these were able to conduct us, holding that there were many truths given by revelation to which reason could not attain at all. Our school-boy might thus reflect that the two ways whereby men had acquired divine knowledge correspond very closely to the two ways, so familiar to himself, of becoming possessed of the answer to a mathematical problem working it out for himself or taking it on trust from his master or text-book; except that he had here to do with some theorems which he could not possibly work out for himself, and that the authority from whom he took the answers on trust could, unlike his master or his text-book, be shown to be incapable of error.

What was disturbed after the break-up of the Middle Ages in Europe was not the terms of the distinction, but the balance of emphasis between them. This happened in two opposite ways. The rationalists of the 17th and 18th centuries, though rarely quarrelling with the traditional understanding of reason and revelation (so that there was little or no dispute at this point between them and the orthodox apologists who tried to answer them),

came to place almost the whole of their reliance on the former, gradually edging the latter out of its former pride of position. The more extreme of them went so far as to deny that any revelation had been vouchsafed to us, asserting that in fact we have no knowledge of divine things save what is discoverable by our own unaided powers. Others, and perhaps the majority, were content to argue that such super-natural revelation as had been given, through the prophets and through Christ and his apostles, could be nothing more than what they called a "republication," for the benefit of weaker minds, of truths which a sufficiently sustained and honest exercise of reason could know independently, or even of truths which formerly had been known but afterwards variously obscured and overlaid by superstition. Either way of it, the rationalists succeeded to their own satisfaction in clearing the whole ground of possible debate for the exercise of their own speculation and especially, as men whose dominant interest was in questions of conduct, in clearing the field of moral knowledge for the intrusion of duteous obligations other than, or additional to, those concerning which our own reason and conscience sufficiently inform us.

So much for the rationalists; but among the early leaders of the Protestant Reformation the medieval balance of reason and revelation had already been disturbed in a very different and indeed opposite way. No more than the rationalists did the reformers quarrel with the terms of the distinction but, taking a darker view than the medievals



of the corruption of human nature, they maintained that human reason was now so damaged an instrument as to yield little or no reliable knowledge of things divine. Accordingly they touch but lightly on natural theology and base their systems almost wholly on the revealed Word. Luther, as is well known, has some particularly hard things to say in contempt of reason, and also in contempt of the scholastic theologians who made so much of it; but at the same time this very turning aside from the light of nature enabled him on occasion to conceive of revelation in other terms than by means of its contrast to that light, and thus sow certain seeds of thought which were to bear fruit in a much later period.

Towards the end of the 18th century the reign of rationalist theology was challenged by the theological thought associated with the beginnings of the Romantic movement in Europe, and above all by the criticism of Immanuel Kant. It is difficult to think of Kant himself as a romantic, but he was influenced by Rousseau as well as reacting against him; and if he recoiled from Rousseau's sentimentalism, he recoiled even more strongly from the rationalist theology of the Leibnitzo-Wolffian school which had so largely affected him in his student days. The theoretical exercise of reason, he contends, cannot conduct us to any such knowledge of super-sensible reality as religion requires. "I must therefore," writes Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "abolish knowledge and make room for faith"—which faith is religion's only proper base. Here as elsewhere in Kant's thought there

is undoubtedly traceable the influence of the Pietist movement under whose auspices he had been brought up in both home and school. The Kantian rejection of natural theology is thus not unconnected with Luther's earlier suppression of it. On the other hand, the "faith" in whose interest Kant rejected it is very different from anything that Luther would have recognized under that name. Though set in contrast with the exercise of the theoretical reason which had issued in natural theology, it was still a rational faith, being in fact an exercise of what he called the practical reason. And when on completion of his great critical trilogy, he was able to devote a whole volume to the theological question, he entitled it *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*.

These influences, acting conjointly, were enough to ensure that the old natural theology, whether practised in the Middle Ages or by the rationalist thinkers of the succeeding centuries, should be little heard of among the leading Continental theologians of the 19th century outside the Roman Communion. Now it might be expected that when the old natural theology was thus out of use, and its "light of reason and nature" so sadly dimmed, we should all the time be hearing of revelation, and of revelation alone. Had the only influence leading to the change been that deriving from the teaching of the Protestant reformers, we should certainly be doing so. In fact, however, the situation turned out very differently. A conception of revelation which had always defined it as providing a supplement to the findings of natural theology

could hardly be left standing when natural theology was declared, as by Kant, to have no findings. Kant himself had made no use of any concept of revelation. The faith which he laboured to defend was very far from being the acceptance of an authoritatively communicated truth, and this was the only meaning of the word with which tradition supplied him. The same is true not only of Hegel, but hardly less of the thinker who was so often spoken of, in the Continental Protestantism of the 19th century, as "the father of modern theology," namely, Friedrich Schleiermacher.

What earned Schleiermacher this title was that, steering his course between Protestant dogmatism on the one hand and philosophic rationalism on the other, he departed altogether from the old dichotomy of reason and revelation and found what seemed to be a middle way between the two. His theology rests neither on authoritatively communicated truths nor on truths excogitated by the speculative reason but on what he calls the "religious self-consciousness" of the Christian community. This selfconsciousness is essentially a sense of complete dependence on the redemption wrought by God in Christ. Romantic that he was, Schleiermacher conceived this consciousness of dependence not as a kind of cognition, but as a variety of feeling. In this he found few to follow him; but his more general contention that theology takes its rise in the religious consciousness, and that all its doctrines are but explications of this consciousness, became the foundation of much Protestant thought throughout the 19th century.

The most influential of those who stood in the succession of Schleiermacher was Albrecht Ritschl, himself a historian of Pietism, and it was his school which ultimately secured for itself by far the largest following. In his view all theological knowledge rests on what he calls "the value-judgements of faith." Ritschl maintains that we should not strive after a purely theoretical or "disinterested," knowledge of God as an indispensable preliminary to the knowledge of faith. "To be sure, people say that we must first know the nature of God and Christ ere we can ascertain their value of us. But Luther's insight perceived the incorrectness of such a view. The truth, rather, is that we know the nature of God and Christ only *in* their value for us."

Ritschl has thus no place in this thought for a rational knowledge of God that is precedent to faith. But neither has he place for a revelation conceived as the authoritative communication of doctrine. His theology has not a double but a single source which corresponds to neither term of the old dichotomy but is in a sense intermediate between them, perhaps partaking in some degree of the character of each. Ritschl himself still makes use of the concept of revelation, though in a changed sense; but there is no doubt that in many quarters, and as a result of the same general development, it suffered virtual suppression. This represented a loss of the most serious kind, yet it is not difficult to see the reason for it. It is as if these thinkers felt revelation to be so universally understood as the verbal or concensual communication of truth by divine authority that only by abandoning

the term itself could they effectively retreat from this wrong meaning.

It is thus very evident that during the course of the 19th century the time-honoured conception of revelation, which defined it in terms of an absolute distinction between the deliverances of the unaided intellect and the acceptance of divinely communicated information, had lost its meaning for many of the leading Christian thinkers. The traditional procedure had—to put it in its baldest form—been first to set down such truths about God as could be reached by rational speculation, and then to advance to these supplementary truths for which we must depend on revelation alone. The contribution of revelation thus tended to be conceived in terms of comparison and contrast with its non-revelation preamble, to which it was regarded as essentially forming a supplement. What it had to offer, when man had come to the end of his own researches, was not something of an entirely different order, but *more of the same*, though deriving from an entirely different source. Christians cannot regret that such a conception should have been departed from; while on the other hand they cannot be too thankful that in our own century, though not without the aid of foreshadowings in earlier periods a new and better understanding of the meaning of revelation is beginning to emerge. What is this understanding? We must now turn our attention to this.

#### REVELATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Revelation literally means an unveiling, the lift-



ing of an obscuring veil, so as to disclose something that was formerly hidden. To disclose means to uncover, but in ordinary usage it does not mean to discover. I discover something for myself, but I disclose it to another. Or I say of one thing that I discovered it, but of another that it has been disclosed to me; in the former case thinking of myself as primarily active, but in the latter as primarily passive.

There is a sense in which all valid knowledge, all apprehended truth, may be regarded as revealed. Knowledge is indeed an activity of the human mind, yet not a creative activity but a responsive one. There can be no valid knowledge except of what is already there, either waiting or striving to be known. The knowing mind is active in attending, selecting, and interpreting; but it must attend to, select from, and interpret what is presented to it; therefore it must be passive as well as active. R. F. Alfred Hoernle writes:

When we perceive, no doubt we are active—we attend, select, engage our interest. But what we perceive comes to us; it is not mainly, and originally never, of our choosing, still less of our making. So also in thinking we are active, but what we think comes to us: the object of thought reveals itself to us, it determines our thinking. Wherever our thinking is good thinking, it is under control of the object. When we are logically compelled to think so and not otherwise, then what we think is true. When we reflect on these familiar facts, the 'activity' of the mind begins to wear a different face. It threatens almost to pass

into passivity. In many ways it would be truer to say that 'our' activity (the activity of 'our' minds) is the activity of *what*, as object or content, fills our minds. If 'I think' is one side of the truth, certainly 'the world thinks in me' or 'reveals itself in my thinking' is the other side.

These words are all the more significant as coming from an idealist philosopher, because idealists are suspected of regarding the object as a sort of emanation of the subject, but what is affirmed here is that all true knowledge is knowledge which is determined, not by the subject but by the object. Here is how another philosopher puts it:

The highest achievement of Reason is attained when the mind is so completely informed by its object that there is as little as possible in the notion we have of the object which belongs to our way of apprehending it, and not really the object itself.

With this we must certainly agree. I see or hear aright when my seeing or hearing is determined, in every particular, by what is there to be seen or heard. The right answer to an arithmetical problem is the one which is wholly determined by the figures facing me. I think validly when my thought is completely controlled by the facts before me.

It is important to make this point because many theologians, in their anxiety to establish or conserve a clear distinction between divine revelation and what they have called rational knowledge, have made this task much too easy for themselves by speaking as if, while the former is something given to us, the latter is something we create for our-

selves, as it were spun out of our own substance; as if the former must be explained by beginning from the apprehending mind. They have thus been guilty of an illicit lowering of the dignity of reason in order to exalt the dignity of revelation; and no good can come of such a procedure. The fact is that no true knowledge, no valid act of perceiving or thinking, can be explained by beginning from the human end—whether it be my perception of the number of peas in a particular pod or my discovery of an argument for the existence of God. In either case cognition is valid only so far as it is determined by the reality with which I am faced. In the latter case, of course, the reality facing me need not, so far as our present point is concerned, be God himself. It may exist only of facts coercively pointing to him; just as the reality directly confronting scientists when they validly inferred the existence of electrons was not electrons themselves but certain other phenomena which coercively pointed to their existence. Thus we can speak of all knowledge, in its distinction from false opinion, as being revealed. But is then the revelation of which the Bible speaks only a special case of this? Does it mean only that, like the rest of objective reality, God is there, independently of us, waiting to be known, so that our knowledge of him is true and valid in proportion as we allow it to be controlled by what, on investigation, we actually find him to be?

The revelation of which the Bible speaks is always such as has place *within a personal relationship*. It is not the revelation of an object to a sub-

ject, but a revelation from subject to subject, a revelation of mind to mind. That is the important thing which differentiates the theological meaning of revelation, the revelation that is made to faith, from the sense in which all valid knowledge has been said to be revelation.

The theological usage is therefore not a special case of this general epistemological usage. Rather it is the other way round. The theological usage of the term is the primary one, and the other is weakened from this and is, in fact, only a metaphor. We have acknowledged the complete justification of the point the epistemologists were desirous of making, yet we cannot completely accept the phrase "The object of thought reveals itself to me" as anything but metaphorical. The object of thought itself undertakes no unveiling. When we speak of it like this we are personifying it: and this fact justifies the statement that, properly speaking, revelation has place only within the relationship of person to person.

#### REVELATION—DIVINE AND HUMAN

But now a further qualification is necessary. Having differentiated the revelation of mind to mind from the revelation of object to mind, we must now further differentiate the revelation of divine to human mind from the revelation of one human mind to another. The former is much more deeply mysterious, but indeed the latter is mysterious enough. It defies precise analysis. I cannot possibly analyse for you, in any exhaustive man-

ner, how my friend revealed himself to me as what he is. Sometimes a person whom I have never met before reveals much of himself to me during a casual meeting of a few minutes; he "gives himself away," as we say. Sometimes we even think we know something about a person at first glance. But we find it exceedingly difficult to say *how* we know. Our reflective analysis may carry us some way towards an explanation, but never all the way, or nearly all the way.

Moreover, this difficulty attaches not only to our way of knowing, but also to the content of the knowledge. When I try to tell you what I have found my friend to be, when I try to describe to you his personality or mind or character, it is impossible that I should do this exhaustively. My description will take the form either of cataloguing some of the qualities I have found in him or of recounting a few revealing words or actions of his, or most probably it will be a combination of both. But no part of this description can be exhaustive. If I recount some of his words and actions, and choose my examples well, it may be that by means of them you will succeed in grasping something of the man himself; but that is only because you fill up what is lacking out of your own knowledge of other personalities to which you think my friend's qualities must be in some degree analogous. And when I recount my friend's qualities, what I am doing is trying to fix certain aspects of my friend's personality in a number of abstract nouns. In other words I am abstracting something from the living tissue of his personality. But no number of



such abstractings can exhaust the fullness of a living personality.

All these considerations apply with greatly increased force to the revelation of God to the human soul. It is doubly impossible that we should give an exhaustive account either of the ways by which we know God or of the God whom we know. For God is not, like my friend, merely one being among others, but is the source of all being. While, therefore, my friend's relations with me can only be through the very limited medium of his own psychosomatic organization, there is nothing through which God cannot reveal himself to me.

Moreover, as to the God who is revealed, theology attempts to give an account of him by an enumeration of "attributes" which are all expressed in abstract nouns. Yet no such enumeration of his attributes can be more than rough and ready; and none can be complete. In the deed of a leadership at Cambridge University each lecturer is instructed to deal with one or more of the attributes of God, but "when these are exhausted," he may go on to some other subject. But they can never be exhausted. The infinite riches of the divine Personality cannot be exhaustively enclosed in any number of abstract nouns. In every such abstraction, in every such conceptualizing we are also to some extent falsifying by regarding one aspect of a living whole in temporary isolation; and not all possible abstractions added together can make up the living whole itself.

All revelation, then, is from subject to subject,

and the revelation with which we are here concerned is from the divine subject to human. We speak, as has been said, of a man's revealing to his fellow, but we also sometimes speak of a man's revealing to his fellow certain items of knowledge other than knowledge of himself. I may say, for instance, that a friend has "revealed" to me the proof of a geometrical theorem, the best way of making *dahi*, or the number of guava trees in his garden. This is, however to use the term in a very much weakened sense. Only if the information offered were something of a secret, as for instance the location of a beautiful rare wild flower, would such a word sometimes be called into service; or still more if what was in question was the "unveiling" of some "mystery."

In the Bible the word is always used in its proper and exalted sense. Not only is revelation always "the revelation of a mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed," (Rom. 16:24f) but the mystery thus disclosed is nothing less than God's will and purpose. The Gita IV 1-3 also states such a purpose for Kṛṣṇa's discourse. According to the Bible what is revealed to us is not a body of information concerning various things of which we might otherwise be ignorant. If it is information at all, it is information concerning the nature and mind and purpose of God—that and nothing else. Yet in the last resort it is not information about God that is revealed, but very God himself. If we consult Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, which is as nearly impartial and as little tendentious a work of

scholarship as is available, we shall be told that in the Old Testament:

... revelation is *not* the communication of supernatural knowledge, and *not* the stimulation of numinous feelings. The revelation can indeed give rise to knowledge and is necessarily accompanied by numinous feeling; yet it does not itself consist in these things but is essentially the action of Yahweh, an unveiling of His essential hiddenness, His offering of Himself in Fellowship.

While in the New Testament:

... revelation is likewise understood, not in the sense of a communication of super-natural knowledge, but in the sense of a self-disclosure of God.

In Christian circles, then, it is a widely accepted view that revelation is not only *from* subject to subject, but also of subject to subject, and that what God reveals to us is himself and not merely a body of propositions about himself. This view owes much to the teaching of Archbishop William Temple, though his biographer tells us that Dr. Temple himself acknowledged his own great debt in this matter to Father Herbert Kelly. Passages like the following have been very widely quoted.

What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself.

There is no such thing as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation; but they are not themselves directly revealed.

Under the influence of that exaggerated intellectualism which Christian Theology inherited from Greek Philosophy, a theory of revelation has us-

ually been accepted in the Christian Church which fits very ill with the actual revelation treasured by the Church, that through revelation we receive divinely guaranteed truths.

The same point had, however, been as clearly made by Wilhelm Herrmann of Marburg as early as 1887:

The thoughts contained in Scripture are not themselves the content of revelation. On the contrary, we must already be renewed and redeemed by revelation before we can enter into the thought world of Scripture (Bible). What then is the content of revelation, if it is not the doctrines of Scripture? There should surely be no doubt among Christians about the answer. One must have practised much unfruitful theology and been subjected to much bad teaching if one hesitates at all. For the Christian and indeed for devout men everywhere, who seek God alone, it goes without saying that God is the content of revelation. *All revelation* is the self-revelation of God.

What this means is clear. The truths which Christians believe, the doctrines and dogmas which their Church teaches, are such as they could not be in possession of, if God had not first revealed himself to his people—revealed his nature and mind and will and the purpose which, conformable to his will, He has in mind for their salvation. The propositions which the Bible contains, and likewise the propositions contained in the Church's creeds and dogmatic definitions and theological systems are all attempts on however different

levels, on the part of those who have received this revelation to express something of what it portends. They are far from being "unaided" attempts. The biblical writers could not have written what they did, had the Holy Spirit of God not been with them and in them as they wrote. Nor could the later dogmatic labours of the Church have been carried through without ever-present divine assistance. Nevertheless the distinction must be kept clearly in mind between the divine and the human elements in the process, however inextricably these may be intermingled in the result.

In this regard the Gita, and more especially the Upanisads, raise an implicit question which seems to be crucial for any discussion of the question of revelation amongst Hindus and Christians. How is revelation to be understood if, in the terminology we are currently using, God and the human soul, or both subjects, are in reality one. To pursue such a question it would probably be necessary to hold the issue of the content of revelation in abeyance, at least initially, and to concentrate on an understanding of the nature of revelation. However, this is not within the scope of our present task and so we must be satisfied with having raised the question.

### EVENTS AS REVELATION

It is safe, I think, to say that no affirmation runs more broadly throughout recent Christian writing on our subject than that all revelation is given, not in the form of directly communicated knowledge, but through events occurring in the



historical experience of mankind, events which are apprehended by faith as the "mighty acts" of God, and which therefore engender in the mind of man such reflective knowledge of God as it is given him to possess. It is clear that this represents a very radical departure from the traditional ecclesiastical formulation which identified revelation with the written word of the Bible and gave to the action of God in history the revelational status only of being among the things concerning which the Bible informs us.

We must, however, think very carefully what we mean when we say that revelation is given in the form of events of historical happenings. For it is not as if all who experience these events and happenings find in them the revelation of God. The question thus arises as to whether even such events as are in themselves "mighty acts of God" can properly be spoken of as revelation if, in fact, there should be nobody to whom they reveal anything. To take the human analogy, do all my efforts to make myself clearly understood amount to a real self-disclosure, if none succeeds in grasping what is in my mind? Surely not. We must therefore say that the receiving is as necessary to a completed act of revelation as the giving. It is only so far as the action of God in history is understood as God means it to be understood that revelation has place at all. The illumination of the receiving mind is a necessary condition of the divine self-disclosure. So Dr. William Temple, in a very clear exposition which has been widely quoted finds revelation to consist not in event taken by itself, but in what he

calls "the intercourse of mind and event" or "the coincidence of event and interpretation." "God guides the process," Temple writes, "He guides the minds of men; the interaction of the process and the minds which are alike guided by him is the essence of revelation." So indeed, the fact of the illumination necessarily belongs to the process of revelation itself; without it an event is no more revelation than light is light without a seeing and illuminated eye.

It will be noticed that Dr. Temple speaks of God as guiding, not only the process of events, but also the minds of men in interpreting these events so as to appreciate their revelatory character.

It is, however, necessary to go somewhat deeper in our analysis. Dr. Temple, it will be remembered, speaks not only of the coincidence but also of the *intercourse* and *interaction* of mind and event; and this conception of interaction must be taken very seriously. When so taken, it implies that the events themselves are in their turn conditioned by the human experience of them. The happenings that compose human history must not for a moment be thought of as a continuum which proceeds independently of their impact on human minds. Rather is history in its very essence a process of action and reaction between external circumstance and human response. "The idea of events-in-themselves," says Dr. Richard Niebuhr, "like that of things-in-themselves, is an exceedingly difficult one." History consists not merely of occurrences, but of events which are occurrences plus *meaning*: and some events are such that the meaning of what

happened is of greater importance, historically speaking, than what happened. For instance, the meaning of Gandhiji's assassination is far more significant for the world than the violent death of an old man. Indeed, we are reminded of the frequently quoted dictum of F. W. Maitland that "The essential matter of history is not what happened but what people thought about it." Or as Mr. Victor Murray says: "History deals not with events but with situations which are of significance to somebody."

We need not here stay to inquire whether some of these statements go too far, but will take from them only as much as confirms us in the conclusion that the sequence of the revelatory events themselves is conditioned by the interpretation put on them. Sacred history is no mere record of the external fortunes of those who were concerned in it; it is even in greater measure a record of how they behaved in the face of these circumstances. The mighty acts of God of which the Bible speaks are not for the most part of the kind that are called, "acts of God" in modern legal codes. On the contrary they were accomplished through human agency. The mighty act in which, above all others, God revealed himself to the Israelite mind was the leading of the tribes out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the promised land; but if this was a story of divine action, so also was it at every point a story of human action. God could not, rather He would not, have led the Israelites on this pilgrimage, if they had one and all refused to be so led. Moses at least had to accept the divine guid-

ance, and to stand firm against all the recalcitrants, if the drama was to be enacted at all. This is part of what we meant when we said that revelation and salvation cannot have place unless the divine intention to reveal and to save is met by a human acceptance of the revelation and salvation, which is none the less a free act for all that it is divinely inspired. The initiative was always with God. The first move was always his. But his second move depended, as constantly comes out in the biblical narratives, on the response men were enabled to make to the first. This has been well put by Dr. C. C. Dodd, who writes of "the pattern of history in which God's covenant with men is established" that:

It has two elements: (a) a direction of events, and (b) an interpretation of these events. These two elements interact. The message of the prophets arises out of the course of events which they have experienced and interprets these events; and because they interpreted them just so and not otherwise, the history of God's people after the Exile took that form and no other; and so all through. The decisive significance of the interaction is accounted for on the Biblical postulates that God is *both* the Lord of history and the Interpreter of His own action to the mind of man. This total structure of event and interpretation is God's Word to man.

Similarly Dr. Wheeler Robinson has written of the prophets that:

They find in the migration of Bedouin tribes from Egypt the evidence of the redeeming activity of

God, and they find in the deportation of Israelites to Babylon the not less clear evidence of the punitive activity of God, vindicating His moral order. The events themselves are, of course, capable of other explanations but this was theirs, and their explanation became itself a new event of far-reaching consequence for subsequent history. Through the actuality of their interpretation of other actualities, God was revealed to their contemporaries and successors.

The same principle applies when we pass from the old Testament (that is Covenant) to the New; when we pass from the Word as it came to the prophets to the Word made flesh in Jesus, the Christ. Biblically speaking this is the full and perfect revelation that gathers up all other revelation into itself. Therefore, it is just here, in the story of him who was both very God and very man, that the interaction of divine and human in the coming of the revelation stands out most clearly. "I am not come of myself" says the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, and "The words that I speak to you I speak not myself, but the Father who is in me, He does the work." Yet this "He does" is always matched in his discourse by the "I do." "I do always those things that are pleasing to Him." Or again, "Therefore the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." If Jesus in his manhood had not accepted the commission from the Father, if it were not so that he could have said, "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me," the course of revelatory



events could not have proceeded. And yet the action of Jesus in doing the Father's will was in the fullest sense free action. It was action which He was tempted not to take, as the Temptation narratives show. Nor was the temptation put aside without struggle and self-discipline. Yet this is not for a moment to be understood as if the Father's enablement was not behind the response as truly as his gracious initiative had been behind the commission. "He that has sent me has not left me alone." This intercourse of the divine and the human is the very meaning of the Incarnation and it is the Incarnation that revelation could alone be perfected, because it is in the Incarnation that the human and the divine interact most fully and most perfectly.

This means that the gracious action of God is behind the response men make to his approach as well as in the approach itself; and this has been the constant testimony of those who have in fact responded, which leads me on to the final point I wish to make before concluding.

#### LISTEN AND OBEY

We shall now endeavour to approach the question of revelation from a less abstract and more personal point of view than that which has necessarily engaged our attention thus far; and to consider in as realistic a way as possible the challenge to each one of us individually that is contained in the impingement of the divine upon our daily life. I would suggest that this challenge is perfectly summed up in two words that constantly recur in

the Bible in the closest association with one another the words "listen" and "obey." To listen and obey—that, according to the Bible, is what is required of us. Yet, but what else? The answer is, nothing else. Nothing at all but to listen carefully to what God would have us know, and then to act in accordance with the divine will.

Speaking of faith as the response to revelation, Dr. Emil Brunner writes in one of his books that "Faith is obedience; nothing else; literally nothing else at all." He goes on to add "Faith is obedience, just as in its turn obedience is genuine only when it is faith, but it is impossible for us to resolve the two words into one" because faith apprehends the indicative of the divine promise whereas obedience is to the imperative of the divine command, and we are obliged to continue in this back-and-forth movement between indicative and imperative. We may say, then, that in revelation we are addressed in both the indicative and the imperative moods, and that what is required of us is that we should listen to the indicative and obey the imperative. "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God. . . and will give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes. . ."—how many passages there are in the Bible that begin like that and then go on to say that, if we do so much, God will do the rest.

Now we are not so naive as to suppose that God speaks to us with a physical voice. We have noted above that divine revelation comes in the form of an imperative, a command—a demand of which, often against our own wish and will, we are made

aware. It is also true that this demand comes to us, not as isolated individuals, but in our fellowship with each other, the community of faith. It is through the claims and needs of our neighbours that God makes his own claim heard.

Then they will reply, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and did nothing for you?' And he will answer 'I tell you this: anything you did not do for one of these, however humble, you did not do for me.'

Men have ever been tempted to think that the important thing in religion is to be punctilious in ritual observances. King Saul said to Samuel, the prophet, "Out of the spoil the people took sheep and oxen, the choicest of the animals under ban, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal." But Samuel replied, "Does the Lord desire offerings and sacrifices as he desires obedience? Obedience is better than sacrifice and to listen to him than the fat of rams."

# Rudolf Steiner's Interpretation of the Gita in the Light of the Gospels

Dr. T. W. Soesman

I appreciate this opportunity to present to you a brief paper on the interpretation of the Bhagawad Gita which has been made by the great Austrian savant, philosopher and spiritual teacher of the preceding and present century, Dr. Rudolf Steiner. From his young age he was attracted to and felt convinced about the facts of spiritual life as much as of the material world. From his own account in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life* and in his hundreds of lectures and articles, Steiner proved beyond doubt that he had clairvoyant experiences and had developed extraordinary occult faculties. This was a boon in his life, a gift of the Gods, which is rarely achieved by even highly gifted persons, after years of strenuous effort. To understand Steiner's philosophical ideas and outlook on life, in their vastness and depth, it is necessary to realise that all his experiences were gained not only from physical but also from spiritual sources of knowledge. His intensive study of science and technology led him to deeper penetration of super-sensible realities, which enabled him to reconcile in a beautiful and artistic manner

science and spirituality. For India today at the cross-roads of civilisation, this is one of the greatest needs.

This unceasing quest into the material as well as the spiritual took Steiner to the writings of the master of poetry and natural science, Goethe. He was entrusted with the task of editing and compiling Goethe's scientific works, which later formed the famous Weimar collections. Steiner expounded his own clarified thinking about the material and metaphysical worlds in these three fundamental books: *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, *Theosophy*, and *Knowledge of the Higher World and How to Attain It*. In these writings and in his lectures to the Adult Education classes in Germany, he expounded the development of a philosophical outlook which uses the rigid methodology of science, but chooses the material as well as the metaphysical world as the objects of cognition. "In every man capabilities slumber, through which he can acquire knowledge of the higher worlds." In 1910 appeared Steiner's comprehensive book "The Occult Science."

Another feature of Steiner's life is his treatment of man as a total being, not only his intellect. So, art and artistic expressions through painting, sculpture, music, eurythmy, dance, mystical plays etc. became an important part of his works. The climax of this aesthetic unfoldment is Steiner's vision of the "Goetheanum," a structure of sculptured wood which unfortunately was burnt, but later built in concrete, erected on the hill-top at Dornach near Basle in Switzerland. Today this beautiful struc-



ture, embodying Steiner's concept of art and architecture, like several adjoining buildings, house the headquarters of Dr. Steiner's worldwide movement: The Anthroposophical Society and allied institutions for the promotion of art, curative education, eurythmy, mathematical and astronomical research, bio-dynamic agriculture, natural system of health and medicine, etc.

Such a profound thinker, scholar and spiritual experienter cannot but be attracted to the Bhagavad Gita, which had become popular in Europe and more particularly in Germany, in the early part of the 19th century. In December 1912 and in January 1913, Dr. Steiner delivered the first series of five lectures at Cologne, Germany, on the Gita in the light of St. Paul's epistles. And, again in May-June 1913 the second series of nine lectures at Helsingfors in Finland, on the occult significance of the Gita, which can be said to be in relation to St. John's gospel. Reading through these lectures one is struck by the deep understanding of Steiner into the cosmology of Indian thought, and specially the happenings and incidents of the ages past, such as the Mahabharata war. With his clairvoyant vision, he had fathomed the depths of the two streams of human experience—the Krsna or the Eastern stream as embodied in the Gita and the Christ spirit as in the Gospels.

There have been many western scholars, philosophers and Indologists of eminence, who have studied this great scriptural poem, the Gita, translated it into many western languages and written long and searching commentaries on the intricacies

of the philosophical systems expounded therein. But, it is the unique approach of Dr. Steiner which has brought about a blending in the understanding of the Gita and the Bible, a task which in our own humble way we are attempting at this seminar. A study of these two series of lectures needs a good deal of intense understanding of both the scriptures as well as a spiritual insight, and not merely an intellectual or academic approach.

After warning the western reader not to be discouraged by the long preparation before the Epistles of St. Paul are reached, or by the intricacies of the old oriental philosophy at the beginning of the lectures, Dr. Steiner says, "It is most important to unite the two lives of thought and teaching; and the student who is patient with the first lectures will be correspondingly rewarded in the stupendous revelation opened out to him at the close." This short course of lectures is, without exaggeration, an occult or spiritual development in itself. It was only during the last 3000 years that spiritual personalities have played a great role in shaping human destiny. The culture of Greece influenced the Renaissance; and the Bhagawad Gita came to be known and appreciated in the West during the 19th century.

The Gita unites the three streams of the Veda, the Sankhya and the Yoga philosophies, which formerly were quite distinct. The Veda (or Vedanta) is the philosophy of monism—*atman* breathing in and Brahman breathing out. Sankhya is pluralistic—the primeval substance is *buddhi*, its second form *ahamkara*, and its third *Manas*, and then the

organs of senses. This classification was all in the days of old clairvoyance; the Sankhya system is a clairvoyant study of the outer forms. The three *gunas*: Sattva reveals itself as soul; Tamas entangles itself in form; and Rajas is the balance between them. Again, while Sankhya is a contemplation of the sheaths of the soul, Yoga is a means of guidance to higher and the inner soul experiences and is a liberation of the soul from outer forms.

Then, Dr. Steiner brings out the analogies from his book on Occult Science:

(a) The description of the human constitution, sleeping and waking, life and death, is a modernised Sankhya philosophy.

(b) The evolution of the world from Saturn etc. is a modern form of Veda, the history of the world.

(c) The evolution of the human personality represents yoga as adapted to the present age.

The Bhagawad Gita appears at a time when the old clairvoyance was dying out and the old blood ties were loosening. Krsna's teaching: the world from Veda, the Law from Sankhya and devotion from Yoga. The spirit man or *atma*, to which we eventually evolve, exists now in the universe. Life spirit or *buddhi* is also in existence, though we have not personally developed it. Spirit-self or *manas*, which arises out of *ahamkara*, is not the same in Sankhya philosophy because the conceptions of Lucifer and Ahriman are absent. This old knowledge has descended now to spiritual science.

Aristotle had only an echo of it, except in re-

gard to colour, where he was on the old path. His teaching of colour was revived by Goethe.

Red and yellow represent the Sattva condition, light predominating.

Green represents the Rajas condition, balance between light and dark.

Blue and violet represent the Tamas condition, dark predominating.

### GITA VIS-A-VIS PAUL'S EPISTLES

Krsna and Arjuna represent the end of old clairvoyance and the passing to the new Bhagavad Gita. The danger of one-sided Sankhya is in the emptiness of cold reason. The danger of one-sided Yoga is in the exclusive looking into oneself. St. Paul teaches a justification by faith and external works. Compare the peaceful dignity of the Gita with the scolding human passion and personal element of St. Paul's epistles . . . Spiritual derivation of epithets and names: Manu, son of God, Krsna; Krsna is revealed by stripping off the three gunas as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

St. Paul's epistles are the key-note to Christianity. The Gita refers to the liberation from a life of action to contemplation or a union with Krsna. The epistles reveal necessity of the Christ-impulse for the evolution and development of the ego as well as the need for evolution for one person to experience what later all generations must experience; and Krsna did this. Let us take the *Ashwattha* or *Fig tree*. Man is an untrained plant. He cannot see with physical body his physical brain and spine,

but etheric observation shows it. This is the Tree of life growing in an opposite direction to the Paradise Tree. The latter is at the beginning of another evolution "Renunciation makes the Tree of Life visible to mankind."

The epistles show Rajas in a personal sense. Krsna speaks only to his pupil, Arjuna, but Paul speaks to all humanity. Artistic perfection can only be obtained when it has acquired the necessary ripeness, and at the beginning of its evolution it appears more or less chaotic. The battle with Lucifer and Ahriman is realised only in the Christian Imitation. The Trinity of the soul, and Ahriman and Lucifer; the new vision of Ahriman necessitates the coming of Christ. Christ overcomes the powers of the spirit or does it for the sake of humanity. Krsna could live in a human body from his birth; the superior Christ-being could only do this for three years.

St. Paul to the Corinthians: one has one gift, one another, and all working together. By inspiration, complete harmony can only be achieved when these worlds are entered in full consciousness. Paul's teaching is of Purusa or the soul. There is a distinct difference between eastern and western revelation. Buddha's saying "Divine forces are being revealed in the Heights, and peace will spread among men of goodwill"! Paul's initiation at Damascus was an initiation brought about by Grace; and on this occasion Christ took the Krsna for His soul-covering: "Behold all was very good."

It is but natural for those whose training has been purely intellectual to controvert Steiner's ex-



positions, but we should remember that the Gita itself was related by Sanjaya to the blind king Dhrtarastra through clairvoyant observation. A long and hoary tradition and faith coupled with the gems of philosophical and spiritual truths embedded in this "Song Celestial," has made the Gita an accepted scripture of the human race. Hence, Dr. Steiner's interpretation, which in many places is based on his own clairvoyant experience needs very painstaking study and more than that, inward experience. That is how the Indian seers and saints have through centuries written their innumerable commentaries and brought out the inner meaning of the Gita; and the Indian mind has regarded all these interpretations with great reverence. In this galaxy we now have these two series of lectures from one who has been described by Dr. Canon Shephard of the Anglican Church as "The Scientist of the Invisible."

In the second series of lectures, Dr. Steiner is concerned with guiding his readers from the lofty oriental wisdom of the past as exemplified in the Bhagawad Gita to the spiritual task of overcoming materialism in the Occident in the present. He explains the dangerous one-sidedness of both oriental and occidental attitudes and discusses the balancing of these two extremes through ego-conscious thinking.

#### BALANCE BETWEEN PASSIVITY AND MATERIALISM

Speaking of contemporary western hostility towards research into the reality of spiritual processes, Dr. Steiner says: "One who has a survey of

reality sees in a materialistic gathering that every materialist harbours a fear of the spirit in his sub-consciousness. Materialism is not logic, but indolence with regard to the spirit. What materialism spins out of itself is nothing else than an opiate for subduing the fear."

Conversely, the attitude of soul found in oriental wisdom harbours the opposite peril. "It is necessary to presuppose an entirely different constitution of the spirit and soul if those who lived at the time of the Bhagawad Gita are to be understood. There everything is passive; there one lays oneself open to the world of images; everything is like a surrender to a streaming world of pictures."

Out of fear before the spirit on the one hand, and passivity on the other, there arises an untrue picture of the world that confuses our present age. The balance between materialistic thinking in the West and passive surrender to a world of pictures that has become unreal in the East, must be actively sought by contemporary men in an understanding and development of the ego. Dr. Steiner concludes that through normal, healthy conscious thinking and active research into nature and spirit, a true life in the sensible and in the supersensible can and must be achieved if we are to master the problems and tasks confronting us to-day.

# Paul and John: Their "Anubhavas" of the Lord

Melvyn Rebeiro

## I. THE ROLE OF ANUBHAVA IN THE FASHIONING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The death of Jesus Christ must have been traumatic for the Apostles. It sent them into hiding. It is reasonable to assume that during this period, they must have recalled the events of his historical life—his words and deeds. It was, perhaps, then that they became aware of the divine pre-existence of Jesus Christ. The new and richer insights they must have acquired into his person and mission constituted an integral part of their *anubhava* of the historical Jesus, on which they were based and of which they were an extension. We are led to suggest that the patent and pre-eminent concern of every New Testament writer must have been to project his *anubhava* of the Lord, to share with us his insights into the Lord's person and mission. It is perhaps for this reason that the Gospels do not seem to be primarily interested in presenting an exhaustive biography of the historical life of Jesus Christ. In fact, one gets the impression that they are very selective with regard to the events they choose to recount and interpret.

We shall confine ourselves to the New Testament writings attributed to John and Paul:

*John:* The Fourth Gospel and John 1-3 seem to have been written towards the end of the life of John the Apostle. The writer states very clearly that his aim is not to narrate exhaustively<sup>1</sup> but instead to testify to and communicate his personal *anubhava* of Christ in order that the lives of his readers may be transformed as a consequence.<sup>2</sup> The *anubhava* is expressed through a few important themes which can safely be interchanged.<sup>3</sup> The narrative sections are subordinate to his leading ideas. These leading ideas must have been very meaningful to the Christians of his time who were exposed to the Jewish, Gnostic and Docetist excesses of the day.

*Paul:* The vast majority of Paul's epistles do not primarily intend to reveal his *anubhava*. This is due to circumstances which were beyond his control and consequently, it is accidental that the vast majority of the Pauline epistles are of this kind. These were inspired by a compelling desire to provide immediate answers to pressing problems, dangerous doctrinal or moral tendencies which menaced the Churches he was unable to visit. He relied very heavily on his personal *anubhava* of the Christian Mystery<sup>4</sup> for the formulation of his advice. In fact, no matter what the problem was, Paul used it as a spring-board to launch out into some aspect of the Mystery of Christ. When Paul had time on his hands and when the problems of a Church did not prompt the writing of an epistle, as was the case with the

epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians, Paul deliberately chose to confine himself to the sharing of his *anubhava* with his readers.

## II. THE PREDOMINANT PERSPECTIVES OF JOHN AND PAUL

Two principal Old Testament themes—Revelation and Creation—seem to have conditioned the presentation of John's and Paul's *anubhavas*.<sup>5</sup> John's emphasis is on Christ as the Revelation of God. Paul prefers to stress the aspect of the New Creation. This is not to suggest that their *anubhavas* were confined exclusively to what they emphasised. There is ample evidence to indicate that the one had deep insights into what the other emphasised.<sup>6</sup>

*John:* Christ is the Word of God

The Johannine *anubhava* of the person and mission of Christ is aptly expressed in the very simple and yet suggestive title—the Word.<sup>7</sup> The Word is Jesus and his utterances.<sup>8</sup> Jesus is both the revelation of God as well as the One who reveals. Yet his teaching is not his own but that of the Father who sent him.<sup>9</sup> He reveals what He has experienced with the Father.<sup>10</sup> It is the Father who decides what He is to say and how He is to express it.<sup>11</sup> The revelation of Jesus will be completed by the Spirit<sup>12</sup> who like the Son, will communicate what He has heard.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus and the Father are one,<sup>14</sup> hence the unity that obtains between them, in the communication of the saving message, is much more profound and



personal than that between Yahweh and the prophets of the Old Testament.

John's predilection for the "revelational" approach, leads him to use the concepts of "Truth," "Light" and "Glory" to manifest the person and mission of Christ.

He is full of grace and truth<sup>15</sup> and is the way, the truth and the life.<sup>16</sup> The truth which He reveals liberates from sin.<sup>17</sup>

God is light.<sup>18</sup> Jesus is the light who has come into the world to save it.<sup>19</sup> He came into the world as light.<sup>20</sup> The life which He communicates is likened to light.<sup>21</sup>

The historical life of Jesus manifests the divine glory. The Son of Man was glorified by the Father even before the creation of the world.<sup>22</sup> This glory is manifested not only through signs and miracles<sup>23</sup> but especially in and through his passion and death.<sup>24</sup>

#### Paul and the New Creation

Paul is not as concerned with Christmas<sup>25</sup> as he is with Good Friday and Easter Sunday.<sup>26</sup> For Paul, the Passion-Death-Resurrection event has not merely delivered man from sin, it has inaugurated a new life, and consequently, a new chapter in the history of mankind.

Paul has used the imagery of creation to express this *anubhava*. The choice seems deliberate and the emphasis with which he does it gives the impression that, at least, as far as the presentation of his *anubhava* is concerned, the other effects of Saving Mystery<sup>27</sup> are secondary in order of importance.

He refers to the Son as the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.<sup>28</sup> He mentions, by way of contrast, that whereas the first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, when anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun.<sup>30</sup> This new creation is continually operative, constantly renewing us in the image of the creator.<sup>31</sup> In the post-resurrection era, the only thing that matters is the new creation.<sup>32</sup>

### III. REPERCUSSIONS

These unique insights into Christ and his mission significantly affect their handling of the various New Testament themes:

#### *Sin:*

Paul understands sin to be a cosmic power<sup>33</sup> which disrupts the first creation by bringing in death.<sup>34</sup> This is undone in the second creation through the power of the "life-giving spirit,"<sup>35</sup> union with whom effects the new creation.<sup>36</sup>

*John* considers sin to consist in a preferring of darkness to the light<sup>37</sup> which is Jesus himself<sup>38</sup> To refuse to believe in him brings down condemnation.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Law:*

*Paul* had in mind the Mosaic Law whenever he referred to the Law. This, he believed, commanded men to achieve moral rectitude but was unable to help them achieve the rectitude of the New Crea-

tion. It revealed sin, man's proneness to sin but did not help him to overcome it. As a consequence, it did not lead to life but to death.<sup>40</sup> Yet God permitted it because it was to be a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come.<sup>41</sup> But now that he has come, it is no longer necessary to observe it!<sup>42</sup> Christ puts an end to the law by bringing righteousness to those who have faith.<sup>43</sup>

*John* is concerned with the revelatory nature of the law. The law is the revelation of God. Yet, the Word, precisely because he is the final, most perfect, and most solemn promulgation of the Divine Law, abrogates and supercedes the Mosaic Law which was merely a precursor.<sup>44</sup>

### *Justification:*

*Paul's* awareness of Christ as the life-giving spirit<sup>45</sup> who has inaugurated a new life, leads him to realise that, in the new creation, sinful man is not merely declared upright before God by a legal fiction but is actually constituted as such.<sup>46</sup> This "righteousness" is given by God to those who have faith in Christ.<sup>47</sup> This "righteousness" is not merely the deliverance from sin; it is the beginning of a new life, that of the Risen Jesus,<sup>48</sup> although the redemption has already taken place,<sup>49</sup> it also has an eschatological phase for we await the redemption of the body.<sup>50</sup>

*John* deals with justification—in his treatment of "judgment." He maintains that each man judges himself when he decides to accept either the light or the darkness.<sup>51</sup>

*Faith:*

*Paul*, like *John*, is aware that faith is the commitment of one's entire self to Christ. Yet he views faith as that through which one is created a Son of God and is united with Jesus.<sup>52</sup> This identification with Christ remains to be deepened. This new creation is to be manifested in a just and devout life,<sup>53</sup> and especially through love.<sup>54</sup>

*John* uses the noun faith only once in the Fourth Gospel and John 1-3.<sup>55</sup> He generally uses the verb "believe." For him "belief" is not a belief about God but a belief in God, not a mere passive acquiescence but a permanent contemplative experience. Belief is experiential<sup>56</sup> and *John* links it with knowledge. In spite of its cognitive overtones, "knowledge" for *John* was much more than an intellectual acceptance. It denoted a living relationship. If eternal life consists in receiving the words of God,<sup>57</sup> it must consist in the reception of the Word Himself. If it implies belonging to Him and letting His Glory shine through us,<sup>58</sup> then obviously it requires that we be offspring of God himself.<sup>59</sup> Further, it is knowing the Father and the Son.<sup>60</sup> This must be analogous to the Son's knowledge of the Father.

*John* lays great emphasis on the illuminative aspect of belief in likening it to vision<sup>61</sup> and he constantly asserts the necessity of living a life in accordance with the light.<sup>62</sup>

*Baptism:*

*Paul*, aware as he is of the New Creation, inevit-

ably connects baptism with the death and resurrection<sup>63</sup> of Jesus Christ.

*John* refers to baptism as a new birth,<sup>64</sup> rather than in terms of a new creation. This seems deliberate since, for him, it is the passage from darkness to light rather than one from death to life.

### *Eschatology:*

*Paul:* The earlier epistles abound in references to the "parousia,"<sup>65</sup> the resurrection of the dead, the judgment<sup>67</sup> and the glory of the justified believers.<sup>68</sup> Yet, in the later epistles, Paul also states that men are, in a sense already saved<sup>69</sup> in virtue of the new creation.

*John* is very much aware of "salvation" as a present reality. Even the apocalypse, which one would normally expect to tend towards a futurist eschatology, refers to the present experience of the Resurrection.<sup>70</sup> Through faith one here and now possesses the life<sup>71</sup> that is light.<sup>72</sup> Consequently it is logical for *John* to assert that man is already judged.<sup>73</sup> The future is no more than a prolongation of the present judgment which each man pronounces upon himself while he accepts or rejects the Light.

## IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A study of the New Testament suggests that Paul and John had a deep insight into the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Revelation and Creation were two very fundamental and inter-related themes. It cannot be that John and Paul had a knowledge of one to the exclusion of the



other.<sup>74</sup> It seems still more unreasonable to suggest that they perceived God through one aspect but not through the other. How then do we explain their preference for—and development of—one theme rather than the other? Is it merely a technique for presenting the message effectively through one dominant theme? It seems to be much more than that. It suggests the preponderance of one perspective, Revelation or Creation as the case may be, in their personal *anubhavas* of Christ. As a consequence, that particular perspective dominates the expression of their unique *anubhavas* in the New Testament. It dominates their handling of the various New Testament themes.

Their *anubhavas* are just as complementary as Revelation is to Creation in the Old Testament. The specific nuances of their *anubhavas* differ. Yet, were it not for this, the New Testament presentation of the Christ-event would be vastly impoverished.

#### REFERENCES

1. John 20:30-31
2. I John 1:1-4; John 20:30-31
3. E.g. Light, Life and Love.
4. His initial *anubhava* of the "mystery of Christ" did not unravel every implication of the person and mission of the Risen Lord. It merely provided him with a basic orientation. His epistles seem to indicate that his understanding of the Christ-event deepened with the passage of time. If the captivity epistles (Col. & Eph.) are any indication, then it is

likely that he realized the cosmic dimensions of this Mystery only in the last decade of his life. For further details cf. The Jerome Biblical Commentary 79:9.

5. This paper is based on the very excellent article of Pierre Benoit on "Pauline and Johannine theology." Cf. Cross Currents. Vol. XVI, No. 3. pp. 339-353.

6. *Paul* too is aware that Jesus is the revelation of God. This is implicit in his repeated insistence on the divine origin of the Gospel which he preaches and also in his assertion that God will stand more completely revealed on the Last Day than He was at the Incarnation. (I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7). *John* is not unaware that the Word is the creator and that all that is living has life from Him. (John 1:3-4).

7. John 1:1

8. For Paul, however, the Word is usually the Gospel (I Cor. 14:36; II Cor. 2:17).

9. John 7:16

10. John 8:26,38

11. John 12:49

12. John 14:26

13. John 16:13

14. John 10:30

15. John 1:14

16. John 14:6

17. John 8:31-36

18. I John 1:5

19. John 3:16-19; 8:12

20. John 12:46

21. John 1:4

- 22. John 17:24
- 23. John 2:11
- 24. John 17:1 f; 12:23-24.

John sees the Father as glorifying the Son on Good Friday itself. Paul instead sees the Passion and Death as a prelude to the Resurrection. For Paul it was the Resurrection that glorified Him and earned Him the title "Lord."

- 25. The Incarnation

26. He does not ask men to identify themselves with Christ in His birth, infancy, baptism, hidden life, miracles and public life; but he expects them to identify themselves with Christ in His death and resurrection.

- 27. Viz. Reconciliation, expiation, redemptive liberation, and justification.

- 28. Col. 1:15
- 29. I Cor. 15:45
- 30. II Cor. 5:17
- 31. Col. 3:10
- 32. Gal. 6:15
- 33. Eph. 6:12
- 34. Col. 2:13
- 35. I Cor. 15:45
- 36. II Cor. 5:17
- 37. John 3:19-21
- 38. John 8:12
- 39. John 16:9
- 40. Rom. 7:10
- 41. Gal. 3:24
- 42. Gal. 3:25
- 43. Rom. 10:4
- 44. John 1:14-17

45. I Cor. 15:45
46. "Katastathesontai": Rom. 5:19
47. Phil. 3:9
48. Rom. 8:11
49. Rom. 3:24
50. Rom. 8:23
51. John 3:19-21
52. Gal. 3:26
53. Eph. 4:23-24
54. Gal. 5:6
55. in I John 5:4
56. Since its object is a person
57. John 17:8
58. John 17:10
59. John 1:12-13
60. John 17:3
61. John 1:14; 6:40
62. I John 1:6-7; 2:9-10
63. Rom. 6:3-11
64. John 3:5-6
65. I Thes. 4:15-16
66. I Thes. 4:16; I Cor. 15:13
67. II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10
68. Rom. 8:18,21; I Thes. 2:12
69. Rom. 8:24; I Cor. 15:2
70. Apoc. 20:4-6
71. John 11:25
72. John 1:4
73. John 3:18-21
74. This fact is borne out by their writing.

# The Bhagavad Gita as a Guide to Daily Life

Maj. T. Ramachandra

The important thing to consider at any meeting where religions or religious scriptures are discussed or studied, is to find out the application of the principles expounded therein to one's daily life and conduct. If religion does not fulfil this pre-eminent role of uplifting human personality, and regularising and upholding higher values in life, then such a religion has no place nor use to society. This can be seen from the present tendency on the part of the younger generation, mostly of western countries where education has made great strides and science and technology are at their peak, to reject religion as such. I have had many occasions to meet and hold intimate discussion with a large number of western youths, who are coming to India, including those who are nick-named "Hippies."

While all these youngsters with one voice and sincerity have discarded their faith and given up their connections with the so-called established religions of their fathers and fore-fathers, they are not without a religious impulse. They have evolved a religion of their own, a religion of humanity, whose undertone is a deep resentment and rejection of out-moded religious shiboleths and meaningless

observances and rituals, not to speak of their hatred and denunciation of the religious aristocracies represented by priests, pandits, and mullas. The pompous and wasteful life of these religious heads is itself a contradiction to the spirit of religion, which they are supposed to foster. Hence, rejection of religion by the youths of today is a natural corollary of the widening gap between profession and practice.

One of the things which has concerned me during all these years of work with the people, is the redemptive power of the prophets of all faiths, and how far we can justify by our conduct that we have absorbed that faith as part of our behaviour towards our fellow beings. In Jesus Christ, the crucifixion symbolises the greatest act of suffering for the sins of mankind and the resurrected Christ symbolises the hope for man for a better life here and hereafter. Thus, the very phrase Christian attitude has ingrained in it the spirit of charity, love and compassion. And, where this spirit is not in evidence, we have failed Christ and Christianity has failed us.

One of the very popular religious songs or bhajans amongst the Hindus, and which is also Mahatma Gandhi's favourite prayer is: "*Raghupati Raghava Rajarama, Patita Pavana Sita Rama.*" The emphasis here is on the distinctive quality of Rama as Patita Pavana; that is, the redeemer and uplifter of the fallen. Thus, Christ is not Christ if He cannot redeem and Rama is not Rama if He cannot uplift. The significance of this to every human person is the direct link with the God-head as a friend in



need to lift one-self from different stages of human existence towards a divine life. It is here that the Gita, amongst all scriptures of the world, provides day-to-day guidance for not only regularising one's conduct but more than that, for showing the path step by step and stage by stage, how that path is to be trodden and the goal is to be attained.

Amongst Gita's innumerable beauties is the ever present fact that it is a Book of Yoga—"Yoga Sastre." And, its very first words are "*Dharma Ksetre*" and "*Kuru-ksetre*," which emphasise the field of *dharma* or duty and the field of *karma* or action. It is in these two fields that man has to move and have his being. Secondly, in the Gita the God-incarnate Krsna does not speak to his human disciple Arjuna in terms of any abstract philosophy, but the Divine charioteer uplifts the despondent Arjuna, fills him with hope, shows him the Divine vision, and exhorts him to fight—"Tasmat Uttisth Kaunteya." Thus, for every one beset with confusion and unable to decide which way to act, the Gita gives the courage and shows the path.

The Gita's uniqueness consists in the questions of Arjuna and the apt replies given to them by the Lord, specially where Arjuna is filled with doubt and where he is not clear as to the purpose of his goal. The divine teacher is so fond of his disciple that He takes him through the maze of sociological and psychological analysis and leads him on to a spiritual conquest of himself. The Divine Lord has revealed His presence in humanity as Avatara Purusa, not only for establishing righteousness and

for removing injustice, but more because God loves His creation and therefore, comes in the form of an Avatara or the son of Man. This aspect of Revelation was indicated to me by the great Sanskrit scholar Fr. Antonie of St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, when he quoted the Kita Chapter XVIII, verse 64. "*Istosi me*"—because you are my beloved, I reveal to you this Yoga of life and dispel all your doubts.

Let me recall a few salient features where the Gita has direct relationship to life. All through one's life we all have to face a similar situation like that of Hamlet, "To be or not to be." This is reflected in Arjuna's position as to where his duty lies; he does not shrink from battle because he is a coward, but because he is brave and he is overwhelmed by his consideration for his kith and kin and his revered teachers and grand-sires, whom he has to kill on the battlefield. Such a conflicting situation always faces each one of us. Krsna's exhortation as to the unpermanance of the physical body and all material objects is one to be treasured; and out of this arise the attitude of non-attachment to life and the principle of trusteeship of one's wealth and possessions. The clearest fact is that death and dissolution are absolutely certain and what we hoard with so much effort and worry and even through unrighteous means, is not going to come with us to the grave or to the life beyond. At the same time, the Gita assures us of the births yet to come and that death is not the cessation of the life cycle. It is just like discarding worn-out garments and taking on new ones, or in the Upanis-

adic language, the shedding of the slough by the snake.

### BALANCED OUTLOOK OF LIFE

It is not enough to have an attitude to death; but we should have an attitude to life, and here is Gita's most unique message of *Samatve-bhava*—the yoga of Equanimity. At every stage Arjuna is being asked to look on all kinds of opposites with a balanced outlook, neither get elated with success nor depressed with failure. The closing verses of the second chapter most vividly describe the qualities of a "Sthita Prajna." Here has been described not only the nature and characteristics of a person of equipoised mind, but also as to how to develop these qualities step by step, as a process in the psychological development. These verses describe how the mind and heart of a person get involved and how desires carry away the senses and also the understanding of even a wise man. Hence, the way to get free is to withdraw oneself from attraction to sense objects. When the highest bliss is obtained—*Param drstva*—by the realisation of the Divine, the hankering after sense-objects ceases.

The Gita ends this message with a terrific realistic note that there is no peace nor happiness for a confused mind: "*Na Sukham Sansayatmanah*," and a person who persists in his confusion goes to perdition—"Sansayatma Vinasyati." It is no wonder that Gandhiji, the sage of the present country, an Avatara purusa in his own right, who tried to live up to the teachings of the Gita, adopted these verses as part of his daily prayer.

The various and varied commentaries on the Gita beginning with the great Acaryas, Samkara, Ramanuja, Madhva and Vallabha and now in modern times by savants like Shri Aurobindo, Tilak, Gandhiji and Vinobaji have no doubt emphasised their particular viewpoints. But, all of them are agreed that the Gita's prime objective is to inculcate the ideal of *karma-yoga*, or the pursuit of action unsullied by any kind of attachment, *niskama karma* or *anasakti yoga* as Gandhiji termed it. To work alone one has the right and not a whit to the fruits thereof. At the same time, detachment to the fruits of action is not to mean indifference to or neglect of one's duty nor slipshod and slovenly action. On the contrary, Lord Kṛṣṇa definitely says "*Yogah karmesu kausalam*"—Yoga that is *karma-yoga* is skill in action. It requires strenuous inner searching to grasp this great ideal of unceasing work for *loka-sangraha* but without being unruffled by failures or difficulties. It is an unceasing fight to conquer one's inner enemy and face external situations.

Arjuna still persists in his student-like attitude, doubting in mind; and he poses one more significant question in Chapter III, verse 36, "Impelled by what is one driven to repeated sins, even most unwillingly and against one's own good judgement;" Kṛṣṇa answers this enigma by a direct onslaught on the root causes of sin, namely, "It is passion; it is anger born out of *Rajo-guna*." Having stated this hypothesis, Arjuna is led step by step as to how this wickedness of desire, which obscures intelligent will and the power of discrimination, is to

be overcome. Here is the message of regulating one's conduct.

All efforts of a human being to attain perfection and build up divine qualities will be possible only by an attitude of humble devotion. Even the quest of knowledge of the Supreme Being and seeking identification with the Divine or the attainment of success in life as a karma-yogin, these are possible only for a devoted and dedicated person. After having witnessed the *viswa-rupa* or the vision of the universal God-head, Arjuna desires to know the qualities of a true devotee. The whole of chapter XII is an answer to this. It is constant self-surrender to the Lord of your heart—the Ista-Devata, and by fixing all your mind and reason on Him, you become entitled to redemption and grace. "Give up all and Follow me," so said Lord Jesus. In the same words, Lord Krsna says: "*Sarva Dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vrja*": giving up all duties seek refuge in Me alone; and then you are assured of your being enabled to cross the ocean of sin and sorrow. This is the gist of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, namely, the descent of Divine Grace coming to man as a result of his aspiration and effort in complete self-surrender to the Divine will. Lord Krsna has delivered the different processes of attainment of the Divine, through constant practice of meditation failing which another way is shown, namely, by performing action as an offering to the Divine. Even if this is not possible; we are asked to simply relinquish the fruits of action and do duty as duty, for this relinquishment alone brings peace eternal: "*Tyagat santir anantaram.*"

## FORGIVENESS FOR ALL

A single verse in Chapter XII contains the essence of all human conduct and forms the basis for all personal and social relationship:

*Adwesta sarva bhutanam Maitrah Karuna eva ca:  
nirmamo nir ahankarah sama duhkha sukha  
Ksami*

No other daily prayer or holy mantra is needed for the purification of one's heart and life than what is contained in this verse. No ill-will to any creation and not merely to human beings, and on the positive side cultivation of friendliness and compassion, without a tinge of pride or egoism, is what is inculcated. Lastly, to look both sorrow and joy equally and to be everforgiving. This forgiveness of the faults of others is a divine quality, and the ringing words of Jesus on the Cross while suffering the greatest agony of his life, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," is an ever-present call to our conscience.

This word forgiveness brings to my mind what happened when the famous Cathedral at Coventry in England was destroyed and burnt by enemy bombing during the blitz of 1942. The entire structure of steeples and spires had been turned into rubble; and after the siren sounded the air-clear signal, the pastor of the Cathedral walked amidst the ruins, took two pieces of charred timber and stuck a nail as a cross and stood it at the altar, and then taking a charcoal piece wrote on the stone the words "FATHER FORGIVE," pregnant with spiritual truth and feelings. This act of the pastor,



deriving the message from the Lord, is an exhortation to humanity to practice the virtue of forgiveness. Now stands the new cathedral, adjacent to the old, which has been built by contributions from the Germans and others all over the world. Such is the power of forgiveness!

Another touching scene is where Jesus asks the woman hauled up before him for adultery: "Woman rise; go home and sin no more."

Apart from dealing with ways to individual perfection, the Gita describes in detail the different natures—*gunas*—to which man is subject, and how the qualities of *Satwa*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* are generated and how their evil effects are to be overcome in order that one may become a "*guna-atita*", beyond the triplet of *gunas*.

Let me close this paper with the memorable words of the Gita:

*"Yajno danam tapascaiva pavanani manisinam"*

Sacrifice, charity and austerity, these alone will uphold human existence, and to this let me add *karma* or action.

## Concluding Remarks\*

Swami Chidanandaji

Swami Chidanandaji in his valedictory remarks started with a statement of his approach to the topic. When people of varying faiths meet, it is natural that there would be some differences. But our approach should be to study the underlying unity amidst diversity. All religions are fundamentally one as they are rooted in spirit. In fact there is only one religion and not religions. There is an urge in every individual to experience the divine to which he belongs. Religion is no religion if it does not unify. It should, in fact, be the most successful unifying factor in the world today. Unfortunately religion has paraded in the name of true religion. We have taken hold of the husk quite contentedly, ignoring the substance.

Further, religion no matter how or where it has been expressed is a living relationship with the universal soul who draws everyone irresistibly. Religion beckons us to that wondrous state, the state of communion with the divine which is the birthright of all. Yet economic life has so absorbed our interests that it has encroached upon our religious life and greatly impaired it. Hence there is a historical need for God to send *avatars* to make us aware of Him. Theology should make us

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\*Prepared from notes taken during the discourse by Swamiji

more and more aware of God. If it does not, then it stifles the soul of religious life. Rituals, ceremonies, modes and ways of expressing the relationship between man and God are influenced by geographical, economic, social and political circumstances. They are not sacrosanct. They are considered secondary by all prophets and seers.

Regarding the role of reason in the realisation of the Absolute, it may be stated that reason, precisely because it is created by God, would always find the Infinite beyond its finite reach. If one were to use a simile from space travel, reason is like the rocket which helps us to get beyond the gravitational pull of the earthboundness. Reason can be a tool of salvation for one who is bereft of other qualities of head and heart, useful in helping man release himself from mundane attachments.

The law of *karma* does not preach fatalism. On the contrary it embodies both determinism and freedom—determinism for the past and freedom for the future. There is *bhoga swatantrya* and not *karma swatantrya* for the individual. So far as our past actions are concerned, we are bound; but the future is in our hands. Our present actions can be a great force in helping us acquire strength to face the future. Though you may not bring about complete transformation in society, yet by your religious pursuits you will be subjectively so prepared that you will not be moved by any calamity. You will stand the buffets of misfortune with equanimity while your fellow mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.

## Discussion

Rev. D. C. Scott in his welcome address stated that the meeting was part of a universal movement and was unique since it was the first seminar on the Gita and the Bible in this country. Explaining that neither a comparative nor a competitive study of the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible was envisaged, he expressed the hope that the participants would share with each other the profound and elevating thoughts of the scriptures in a spirit of humility.

During the fruitful discussion that followed the reading of the papers, the following points were suggested.

Reason and revelation are not contrary. Reason indicates the ideal to be attained; but does not get to the vision of the divine as *anubhava* does.

Religion should not underestimate the value of reason if it is to remain in accord with the central striving of the modern world. It is necessary to redeem religion from the dangers into which it is likely to fall, namely, the danger of too much of ritualism and occultism.

The vision of God is not hypothetical to be attained hereafter but a veritable reality to be had here and now provided we have that unflinching faith in God and carry on our devotional pursuits continuously.

We can speak of only limited human freedom. Though man is free, ultimately God's will prevails.

Man is free to take any move he pleases, but God will counteract that move and ultimately victory belongs to God and not to man.

Advaita Vedanta talks of self-realisation or the vision of God as a unique experience where the epistemological categories like subject, object and subject-object relation are not applicable.

The response to and reception of the revelation by man is aided by God. Thus even for the rise of devotion in us God's grace is necessary. God may shower his grace even on the unmerited; his grace may be *Ahetuki Krpa*, for the ways of God are past finding out.

The Gita stands for *Jnana-Karma-Samuccaya*, integration of action and knowledge. It is both *Brahma Vidya* and *Yoga Sastra*, as the colophon of every chapter of the Gita mentions.

For an *atmarata*, that is one who is enjoying the bliss of Brahman, there is *karya*—work which waits to be done, but not *kartavya*, an obligation or duty.

One should get over the illusion that one is an actor or a chooser. The aim of the Gita is to eliminate the ego which is connected with the choice. Choice is not freedom but non-choice is freedom.

We ought to love even those who are not so noble in their attitude to other religions. Guidance from men endowed with inspiration is indispensable if we are to:

- understand and love the diverse races, cultures and religions of India;
- go beyond the words of the sacred scriptures and become aware of the evolution of God's revelation;

- understand the limitations which the times and the circumstances placed on the saints;
- save religion from the limitations of the past;
- and become more aware of the interrelationship of action and contemplation.

Avatahood is bestowed on a man when he has served society to the satisfaction of later generations. Every *avatara* is temporary and local. God puts all his energy into an *avatara* for some time, later taking it away when this work is accomplished. About the task of carrying conviction to the custodians of religions today regarding the need for change it should be noted that truth reaches the people only through love, service, suffering and death.



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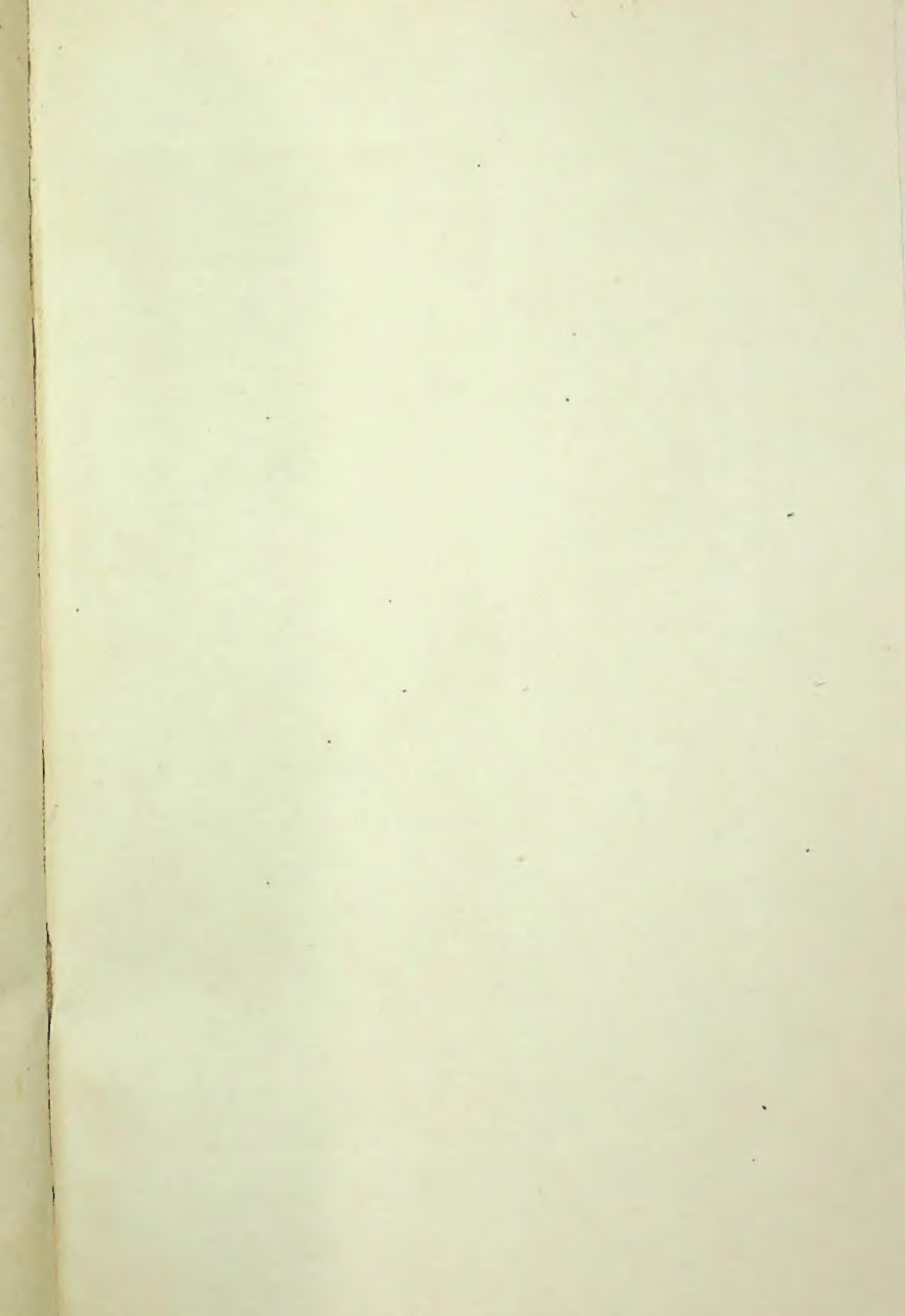
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## About this book.....

This book is a rare collection of the papers presented and views expressed by top scholars of the country at a seminar held in Rajpur, Dehra Dun in the foothills of the Himalayas. This was a unique occasion as it was the first seminar on the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible in the country. The participants, both Indians and those of other nationalities who represented both the faiths made a careful and purposeful study of the scriptures. They exchanged views and experiences appreciating the abiding elements in both the scriptures. The teachings of the scriptures which forms the basis of Hinduism and Christianity were interpreted in a spirit of humility so that "a noble society will come up to a higher standard preached in the scriptures."

Sponsored jointly by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur the Seminar had the blessings of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. A beginning has been made for further study and enlightenment which, it is hoped, will bring these two great religions closer.

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